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by STEVE FRAZEE
ISLAND OF ADVENTURE
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Adventure

MAGAZINE

Registered U. S. Patent Office

JANUARY, 1953

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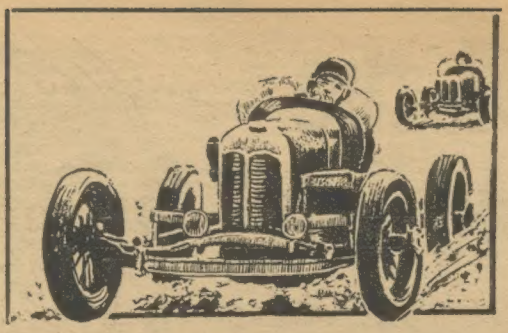

The Men Who Supply It— Page 98

ASK ADVENTURE

AUTOMOBILES— RACING

ENTERING the Indianapolis.

What are the requirements for entering a vehicle in the Indianapolis 500. Such as entry fees, engine requirements, braking, safety measures, etc.

Are the requirements for entering a car in the stock car races similar to the Indianapolis 500. Can the engines be modified in any way?

Thomas Caffarello,
S/Sgt USAF

Reply by Walt Woestman: The requirements for an Indianapolis car are the same as for any championship car, which run the mile, and sometimes longer, tracks.

While it would be impossible to give all of the details I will give you the highlights on the requirements:

Engine: Maximum displacement is 270 cubic inches for self-aspirated and 183 inches for supercharged. (This does not apply to diesel engines, which are allowed more inches.) Free selection of fuel, which includes methanol, with no limit on the amount used or carried. Some method of start ng, other than towing or pushing.

Car: Minimum wheelbase 96 inches. Brakes must operate on all four wheels and are checked as part of the safety inspection. Further safety measures require a magnetic inspection of the steering system, which includes the spindles. Fuel tanks must pass inspection of the Technical Committee, as must all other parts of the car. Fuel shutoff and ignition switch must be within reach of the driver. Exhaust pipes must extend beyond the driver's seat. Wheels must be of an approved type. As a matter of fact, every part of the car must be approved before the car is given a license. Not only at Indianapolis, but for any track, of any size. Entry fee for Indianapolis is $500 and varies at other tracks. Each car must have a licensed mechanic in attendance.

The only modification on stock cars is the strengthening of wheels, hubs and steering parts. Positively no modification of the engine is permitted.

Stock cars qualify in the same manner as championship vehicles. The fastest of a given number of cars are allowed to start. At Indianapolis the limit is 33 starters but with stock cars the number varies.

Please understand that the information covered is for AAA races, and is not to be confused with the so-called "stock" cars of other associations, which may range from the jalopies to passenger cars with racing engines.

HOPPING up the Nash.

I am thinking of planing .050 from the head of my 1946 Nash Ambassador. Will this give me more power, better performance, better economy? Is it mechanically sound? What will do these things and not cost a fortune?

L. G. Bowerman,
Vernonia, Oregon.

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Leonard C. Lane, B.S., M.A.
President of Radio-Television Training Association, Exec. Dir. of Pierce School of Radio and Television

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(Continued from page 6)

Reply by Walt Woestman: You should be able to plane .050 from the head, which will raise the compression ratio. However I would suggest that you check with your Nash dealer before doing so as I do not know just how thick the casting is. And you must be certain that there is enough clearance between the valves and the head of the piston.

Increased compression will only be of benefit if the engine is in good condition to start with. Rings, bearings, valve guides, cylinder bores and the rest of the engine parts must be taken into consideration at all times.

I drove a 1935 Nash Ambassador for over 100,000 miles, in strictly stock condition, and found it to be an excellent automobile, but the engine does not readily lend itself to the usual hop-up conversions.

SOUPING the fluid drive.

I am aware that the advice which I am after is removed from your field, but since I am at a loss for anywhere else to go, here it comes. I wish to soup up the motor in my '41 Dodge business coupe and would like some advice on the procedure before I begin. The condition of the motor makes it necessary for it to be torn down for repairs in the near future and I think that is, without a doubt, the time to begin this.

The car will be used exclusively for road and street, so I wouldn't be interested actually in any racing equipment.

The cost of the job will have to be considered also and will necessarily have to be in the lower bracket. By this I mean in the neighborhood of $250 or $300 dollars—less if possible. What necessary changes could you advise for this job and what parts would be required? I expect to rebore the cylinders—how much oversize is possible or, I should say, needed? I would like to reach a happy medium on performance and economy if that would be possible. Can I adapt dual carburetors to this model engine and still expect any gas mileage? I had something of an idea set up about the job beforehand. I had planned to put a high-comp. head. dual exhaust system and the above mentioned carburetor setup. From that point, I am lost, being relatively inexperienced in this type of work. Any advice which you might have on my problem would be greatly appreciated and a reference to someone else, in case you have not, would also help me out.

This car is a fluid drive model, if that might enter into the picture.

I had also thought of lowering the car if it could be done without extensive body work.

Bruce May,
Kendrick, Idaho.

Reply by Walt Woestman: As far as I know there is no speed equipment made for the Dodge engine, with the exception of heads and possibly dual manifolds. As you have limited yourself to a price of $250, or thereabouts, the heads and manifolds would be out of the question. That is if you consider a complete engine overhaul, which is evidently needed in any case.

If the engine needs a rebore, and it shouldn't need one unless the cylinders have an excessive taper, you will need new pistons. Oversize pistons—stock—usually come in ten over, and cost no more than standard size.

It is possible that the cylinders could be merely honed and in this case the old pistons could be used. Of course new rings must be used, and I highly recommend Perfect Circles. I would suggest that the pistons—either new or old ones—be Nurlized, but I do not approve of piston expanders in any case.

The valves, of course, should be ground, and new ones installed if needed. New connecting rod bushings and probably new crank bearings will be needed. Usually new piston pins will be required. If the shaft is much out of round, it will have to be reground.

You could have the camshaft reground by one of the shops specializing in this work. Probably a ¾ grind would be best suited for you.

The head could be planed to give 8-1 compression, but I wouldn't suggest going any higher than this for highway use. Special distributor points would help, although I do not know if these can be had for Dodge engines. The substitution of a Bosch coil will possibly be of help. All new wiring of course. And don't forget a suitable condenser for the new coil.

I don't know how much could be turned from the Dodge flywheel, but I would lighten it as much as possible, if at all possible. But with fluid drive I rather doubt that this can be done.

Dual carburation would probably give you a higher top speed, but is not usually conducive to fuel economy. If you want this economy I would sugest a new carburetor, or a good overhaul of the old one.

The car could probably be lowered with a set of blocks, which are quite inexpensive. A dual exhaust system might help on both speed and economy, but is rather expensive. Unless you are able to do most of the work yourself, I do not see how you can get by for even the top minimum you have in mind.

THE inside story.

I would appreciate it very much if you would give me the degrees of valve timing using different cams, that is, semi, three

(Continued on page 10)

CHAD says

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Thousands say:—

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and I will send you both History and Mascot.

(Continued from page 8)

fourths, full, track, and special grinds.

I also would like to know what you think of the modified stocks and cam grinds for one half mile track.

About how long could a full conversion hold up at close to top R.P.M.?

James Fische,
Manchester, Tenn.

Reply by Walt Woestman: It would be utterly impossible to give you the degrees of valve timing of all of these cams. Cam grinders have hundreds of different timings on their various cams, and usually the cams are ground to the buyers' specifications.

When you take into consideration the opening and closing of both intake and exhaust valves; the intake duration; the exhaust duration, and the degrees of overlap, I am sure that you will understand that the figures on even one single make of engine would fill several pages.

If you will be more specific as to make of engine and just what it is to be used for, I might be able to recommend a cam grind.

As to what I think of the modified stocks: My only opinion on this is that it's a fairly cheap way of having some dangerous fun. There's no money to be made in it and it does nothing to further the automotive design. On the other hand it doesn't cost much to get a car—probably around $500 each, including the modification.

Your last question is unanswerable, due to just what constitutes a "full conversion" and the make of the original engine.

My own racing has always been with strictly racing engines and cars.

**MINING—
PROSPECTING**

ANOTHER prospector for Mazatzal.

I intend to prospect the Mazatzal range as you suggested in the September issue of *Adventure*, and would like the following information if possible:

1. List of equipment needed.
2. How to procure a detailed map of area.
3. How and where to get permission to hunt and prospect the vicinity, if needed.

I thank you.

L. G. Edberg.

Reply by Victor Shaw: Equipment needed for any-and-all prospecting is pretty much the same, though camping needs may vary somewhat, depending on locality. Desert areas of the Southwest require a snake-kit for rattlers except in winter or from November to April inclusive; northern forested areas need warmer clothing, and you need make little provision for carrying water. As for tools—for lode prospecting take a goldpan; a magnifying glass; a 3-lb. miner's pick (*not* a road pick); a #2 round-point shovel with D-handle; a short-handled prospector's pick, pick one side—hammer on the other; a half-pint iron mortar and pestle, for grinding samples to pan for any free gold. You need no acid or blowpipe outfit to test for gold, as there are other positive tests, viz: gold hammers flat, but pyrites ("fool's gold") crumble to grayish powder. Also jab a sample you think may be gold with a knife-point—if *not* gold it will crumble but gold cuts like soft lead. These are enough, as an assay'll prove. No single acid effects gold, but pyrites fume readily with any acid. It's hard, though, to prevent leakage of a vial of acid in camp. And you'd better take along a 3-4 lb. miner's striking-hammer to break samples.

Don't bother with dynamite and blacksmith tools for blasting, as you must come out to record claims, and can get 'em *if needed!*

As to camp outfit—in Arizona use the usual tent, nested camp utensils, an axe, a good compass to stake claims, blankets or bag, maps, a copy of mining laws of state, game laws too, some claim-location blanks at 5c each, paper pad and pencils, some sample sacks, ball of twine, a few assorted nails, a hank of window cord, toilet paper, also a .30-30 rifle for lions. The high bounty on lions has been reduced to $50.00 only, I've heard. Also, oddly enough, you can't kill lions without a special permit from the supervisor of The Tonto Nat'l Forest, or an officer of Maricopa County. But, I'm told, you can take out a black bear permit any time, which also will cover a lion killed whether or not you kill any bear. Funny!

The only county map covering the Mazatzal Range is called the "Roosevelt Quadrangle." I got hold of one some time back, but hear they are now out of print. You might, however, inquire of the Arizona Blue Print Co., in Phoenix that stocks all kinds of maps—the map may be reprinted now.

You can also buy all the mining tools you need in Phoenix, for most hardware stores there carry them. Your tools, bought new, will probably total you around $15.00 or so. I'd suggest an umbrella-tent—not army type which has a center pole. Get one with corner poles instead, and have room for all your outfit.

You'll be wise to take along a B-D Asepto snake-bite kit which is the best I know.

Note this: The whole range has favorable rock formations, but a report this spring says all ground at Four Peaks has been staked now. So, prospect *north* of there along that 40-mile range. Might drive to Sunflower Café, and tackle it there, or go on to Pass over to Tonto R. and prospect up Pine Mountain.

(Continued on page 107)

ALLURE...

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KILLER IN

Tracklessly, in those snowy wastes, two men lost their lives—and another found his soul!

A Novelette by STEVE FRAZEE

Stan could not lift the doubled form clean of the hole. . . .

THE SNOW

ON THE thirteenth day of his search, nearly two months after the small red plane disappeared somewhere in the vastness between Ibex and Gateway, Norman Stan crossed another mountain and emerged on a snow field under a spine of rock that ran for miles.

He knew then for the first time in a week exactly where he was. There was no name for the great snow field but the finned rock two thousand feet above was the back of a prehistoric monster, and that was how it was named on Stan's three maps—Dinosaur Mountain.

He removed his colored glasses to look at the granite edges across the sky. The valley around Gateway had been greening under a spring sun when he made his brief stop there, but up here the lease of winter was good for another three months. There was no yellow cast on the snow. A cold sun shattered its light on whiteness and threw the splinters into Stan's eyes. He squinted hard and water ran down his cheeks.

Fighting the stubborness of a tight buckle strap, he took his binoculars from their case. Like everything else he wore or carried, the glasses had been new not long before. At times he had wanted to carry them in an outside coat pocket but he had fallen so often he knew now where the binoculars belonged.

After he had studied the nearest part of the mountain for five minutes his fingers were growing numb. He fumbled the glasses into the case and put his mittens on again. With his hands under his arms he looked steadily up and down a narrow slice of Dinosaur. When his vision grew hazy from moisture and red flashes he put the colored glasses on.

From where Stan stood Dinosaur rose up without a stick of timber on it. It came down savagely from the spine but when the wedge began to spread there were fractures on the granite face—blowouts and stair steps that disappeared behind great walls of tumbled rock.

What seemed to be sheerness at first glance contained niches that could hide a B-36, intact.

Stan was learning—he had seen mountains on the east side of Dinosaur during the last two weeks. He would go now along the snow field, stopping regularly to study Dinosaur. If he had seen nothing by the time he reached the northern end of the mountain, he would try the icy rocks themselves.

JACK BUNNER, who owned Mountain Flying Service in Gateway, had said Dinosaur was the likely spot; and he also said the Civil Air Patrol, ten private planes and a big Army search job from Lowry Field, had scraped their landing gear looking over every inch of Dinosaur.

"It's one of those things that might happen to me some day," Bunner said. "I've flown light jobs over these mountains for fourteen years, but every time I start across I know it might happen. He was the most careful pilot here, Stan. Most of those ex-bomber kids were like that. Any one of a hundred things. . . . You a pilot, Stan?"

"No."

"On that route we generally hit the saddle on the north end of Dinosaur Mountain. It's a half mile wide, but you can miss it. The wind was on his tail that day. All reports show it was a clear day, but when the wind hits that range it breaks in seventy directions sometimes. I've seen it put a blast of snow across that saddle before you could read your compass.

"We try to cross the pass with eight hundred feet under us. That leaves twelve hundred feet of mountain on the right and about eight hundred on the left. It's best to hit the saddle. He was a good pilot—and careful, but there's such things as updrafts and down-drafts, Stan. I dragged my tail wheel once on the snow in that saddle, when seconds before I'd had eight hundred feet. Another time I was almost through and an up-draft tossed me higher than Dinosaur in no time at all.

"That's an idea of what can happen up there. I don't know whether he got through, or didn't even get to the saddle. We just don't know. I've thought of everything." Bunner went to the window, watching a light plane skim down a runway, whisking water from small pools on the oiled surface.

"West of here someplace," he went on, "there were two light jobs lost last summer. Five people. We haven't found them. Two years ago a five-place Creston—he gassed here—went down at what we figure twenty-one miles south. He radioed when the engine conked. We haven't found him.

"Some day we will. Deer hunters usually stumble onto one, at least, every fall. That's the way I think it'll have to be with Bob. Sure, I can take your dough and fly you over that country as long as you want to look, but I don't think there's much use, Mr. Stan."

It was then Stan decided that a man on foot had the best chance. He was in a business suit that day, neatly groomed. The following afternoon, with a pack that was already making his neck stiff, he was learning to snowshoe where a hired jeep could take him no farther.

The driver watched dubiously. "Look, Mr. Stan, in a few months when the snow is gone—"

Stan waved his hand and walked toward the mountains on bear-paw webs. He had waited too long already. He was doing this for himself, as well as for Bob.

His gear was snow-stained now and the

pack was lighter. He had gone through hell on the east side of Dinosaur, fighting the timber, trying to zig-zag across the route that Bunner's air map showed, learning the hard way to survive in an Artic tent when the timber popped with cold.

Now he wore a beard, and his brow and cheeks were dark from snow-burn, and he moved on the bear-paws still carefully but with some sureness. He no longer looked like the city attorney who had told himself he could do nothing anyway, especially just when some of the boys needed to be helped out of a bad situation.

His thinking had changed also. There had been too little of him against his background during the last two weeks. It was no longer "some of the boys in a jam", but politicians making a filthy steal. He admitted it now. In the snow, under the impassive stares of granite like Dinosaur, there was something wrong with a man if he could not admit the truth to himself.

Another one hundred and twenty-one steps—with his stride shortened by the snowshoes, he figured that was about a hundred yards. If not, there was no great difference. He was not making war on a technicality now. Dinosaur was cold and indifferent under the glasses. The snow held only in its ancient seams, but down in the niches where he could not see, there would be mighty pools of snow, fifty or a hundred feet in depth.

Bob's plane—a tiny red dragonfly, smashing itself against one of those fins that ripped the sky, sliding down into a hidden cup. Two months now. Stan hoped the crash had been hard and quick.

He made his steps. He searched the ledges. The glasses were powerful, but nowhere on the ledges and nowhere on the ice-streaked face could Stan see a spot of red, or a bit of naked framework, or any configuration that was not rock and snow.

BOB had filed his flight plan on a clear afternoon. Three hours after he left Ibex there had been a storm, but Bob needed only one half hour to reach Gateway, perhaps minutes less, what with the tail wind Bunner had mentioned. By the time it was known that he was overdue search planes could not go up because of weather. They looked the next day, and for ten days more.

A mountain rescue unit went far toward the east wall of Dinosaur, where a search plane had reported a fire. The fire was burning sawdust at a sawmill.

Deer hunters in the fall. . . . Stan doubted that a deer, or a hunter, ever risked his neck to go into the great wells on Dinosaur.

At noon there was no wind. Mountains lay in all directions, angry Dinosaur there on the right, the Ten Pin Range to the left, and lower summits sweeping in a tremendous curve toward Ibex, "WHERE THE WORLD'S LONGEST SKI LIFT GOES UP TO HEAVEN!" It was eight airline miles over there, Stan knew.

A man well used to webs might make it in two days, but if he went in a straight line it might require ten days. Searching under the line that marked a flight of minutes would require a hundred men and a month of work, even in summer. Stan knew why Bunner had spoken of missing planes that might be gone forever, for this before Stan was just a minute sector of the vast mountains.

He was a tiny speck on a snow field; he was realizing that a man is a tiny speck no matter where he is.

Using his nylon tent and sleeping bag to hold his weight when he sat down, he took off his webs. They made a base for his primus stove. He poured dehydrated soup into a large cup of snow water and let it bubble thick and steamy, eating it with a spoon before it cooled. He made two cups of strong tea.

He drank the last one slowly, looking at the grim Ten Pins, thinking of the long-ago days when he and Bob had taken short camping trips a mile from home, carrying canned goods, iron skillets, heavy blankets and a canvas tent that weighed at least a ton.

They had exhausted themselves but they had been happy. Now Bob was gone and Stan was not happy, but the two facts did not join tightly to explain everything—Stan had not been happy, he knew now, for many years.

Though there was no wind, there was no warmth either. The aluminum cup grew cold. Stan stowed his gear and went on. One hundred and twenty-one steps, then scan the mountain, and then go on once more. And the mountain was indifferent, revealing nothing. The high world used its

vastness to play tricks—Stan told himself the impassivity of Dinosaur came from having nothing to conceal.

He camped that night where black rocks broke the snow. With no tent poles, and timber a long way off, he used the tent as a floor only. His sleeping bag was warm at first but in the sullen stretches of the night a wind screamed down the snow plain, flapping the head shield of his sleeping bag back and forth over the tiny opening where his nose was exposed to air.

There was just the one long blast and then the night creaked with silence again. Minutes later a little rock slide ran on Dinosaur, making the most eerie and the driest sounds that Stan had ever heard.

A feeling of coldness, rather than the actual clutch of cold, was with him the rest of the night.

Dinosaur stood stern at sunrise, its ice streaks taking blue from the sun. Snow pennants swirled around its fins. North, toward the saddle, white scud tossed like spray.

One more day Stan counted steps and looked at rocks and ice on Dinosaur. Trees came toward him step by step, Alpine firs in pale green coats, unconcerned with winter. Now close ahead, where the saddle was a rounding gouge across the spine of the mountains, firs had marched up from the lower slopes. They crouched together below the wind-sweep of the pass, like a company of infantry taking shelter just short of a strong position.

The snow field was narrower now, one side of it falling toward the wedge tops of trees far below. For seven stops the lie of the land was nearly level. This was the end of Dinosaur and here was the saddle where Bob had crossed, or tried to cross.

Stan retraced his route three stops. This end of Dinosaur was the critical area, for it was likely that, if the plane had missed the notch, it had not missed by very much. At each of the three stops he looked through the glasses longer than usual. There was nothing up there; and he knew there had been nothing at all the other stops also.

He went into the saddle and looked down at a sea of timber. A wind came tossing up and set his teeth on edge. Quite carefully he searched the granite flanks on both sides of the saddle. The light was beginning to fail when he gave up. Tomorrow he would go up on the face of Dinosaur.

Although he had not covered much more than two miles today, he was weary. Mere standing had strained his legs and the endless planes of Dinosaur had tired him. The rocks were still before him when he shut his eyes to squeeze away moisture.

Through the faint blue of dusk he trudged toward the firs, his webs making plops in the powdery snow.

Judge Austin Gavett, of a United States district court, had said, "Good Lord, Stan! After six weeks, what's the rush? All you can do now is find him."

That was all. Gavett was gray and successful. No decision of his had been reversed by higher court. He spoke from logic, but he did not know how Stan had sickened of himself in those six weeks, not simply because Bob's plane was lost in the mountains, but because the initial shock had started a reaction which was bringing down an entire structure of smug and easy thinking.

Norman Stan had studied his own case during those six weeks, deciding he did not like the findings.

Yes, all he could do up here was find a broken shell. A ground party would come and carry it away and there would be ceremony afterward. That had seemed important when Stan started but he knew now that the side of a mountain was clean, that snow was deep and pure, that the timber of a forest could rise in peace over a few shreds of wreckage—and that a broken shell might rest better in any of those places than it would in narrow clay.

He could hold the thought as purest logic, but he could not divorce himself from the physical factors surrounding it with ready qualifications.

So he would keep on.

He passed the first outposts of the trees. Around the trunk of each the wind had scooped hollows with whirlpool edging. Somewhere near the middle of the clump he had seen the gray spire of a dead fir. From it, if he could break limbs large enough to lay a foundation on the snow, he would have a fire much bigger and more companionable than a primus stove afforded.

Stan almost walked against the rudder of the plane.

THE sight of the trim red edge of metal shocked him like a blow. He stepped back, staring. In the growing dimness under the trees the plane took shape. All horizontal surfaces were covered with snow. The silver streak along the fuselage was gray in the fading light.

Both wing tips were under the branches of trees, and the nose was almost against another tree. Drifted snow along one side of the fuselage reached almost to a metal step, giving the impression that one ski leg was longer than the other. When Stan moved his head a little, pale light ran on a window, and it seemed for an instant to have come from inside.

Stan stood, letting his discovery reveal more of himself to Norman Stan. All sound and motion of the high wilderness seemed to be waiting on him. The wind was silent and Dinosaur let nothing scale away and the Alpine firs watched mutely.

He stepped ahead and opened the door, standing level with it on the bank of snow. Two pairs of skis strapped to the floor, a blanket beside them, two canvas bags, some papers clipped beside the pilot's seat, and a flashlight in a bracket behind the seat.

A wash of cold air seemed to rush from the interior. Stan closed the door. He stood still, caught by the silence and the coming night and a feeling of deadness that came from the thought of the sleek mechanical creation inert here in the gloom.

Again he opened the door and leaned across the floor to reach the flashlight. When he crouched under one wing, twisting his neck to look upward, he knew by the numbers that this was Bob's plane.

He went all around it with the flashlight. As far as he could tell, discounting damage to the buried landing skis, there was nothing wrong with the plane.

The thought brought an empty feeling.

Taking the papers with him he went deeper into the trees to camp beside the dead fir. By firelight he went over the papers. Air maps, old weather reports, and a program of the Kuss Ski Championship Meet at Ibex. Bob had won the downhill there the morning before he left. He had placed high in three other events.

Skiing had been his life.

After he had been forced to land he must have taken out on skis. Then why. . . . Stan knew nothing of skiing, but he thought a ski expert should have been able to reach safety from here.

There was nothing to indicate injury from the landing, which must have been effected on the narrow part of the snow plain, where it was almost level. It seemed to Stan that the best way to land would be up the gentle slope, instead of downhill toward a clump of trees. Maybe there had been no choice.

Perhaps the saddle had been blanked with snow. Then the best procedure, as Bunner had said, would have been to swing beside Dinosaur and circle for another try. Maybe Bob had done that. Then the engine conked, as Bunner called it, or a down-draft slammed the plane toward the ground, and Bob had been forced to land downhill, coasting to that delicate placement in the trees.

Snow had fallen later in the afternoon. The search planes could not go up until the next day. If the red plane had been standing on the snow field it would have been visible from an angling view of pilots overhead, but in the firs the trees had killed the angle, leaving only snow-covered surfaces.

Bob must have known that a storm was predicted. Stan thought he would have considered, also, the cost and time involved in searching for him. Why then had he not stayed close to the plane, where he could signal?

It must have been cold, yes, but there was wood, and he had at least one blanket and was wearing heavy clothes.

Perhaps he had thought he could reach Ibex on skis before the search began; or perhaps he had thought the storm would last for days. So he had started away on skis . . . two months ago.

A corner of Stan's fire foundation sank into the snow, and then the rest followed. The fire hissed out. Smoke came through the darkness and then it too was gone.

Somewhere off to the left the red plane was standing like a frozen bird.

Stan crawled into his tent.

A MILLION sparkles from the snow the next morning, and sudden warmth, said that spring was probing the high country with her pickets, but in afternoon the pickets fled before a quick-descending cold.

It snowed then.

All morning Stan stayed near the plane, trying to read something from it. He had planned to start toward Ibex in the afternoon. It was the nearest point shown on the maps. Bob must have gone that way.

The snow held on. Although it added little to the depth already fallen, it swirled and made a blinding fineness in the air until late in the afternoon; and so Stan stayed another night near the mute, undamaged plane.

A vague dissatisfaction with the position of the plane troubled him during waking moments. The pat perfection of the setting needled the legal side of his mind—the plane was just too damned well placed out of view from the air.

With his camp broken the next morning, ready to leave, he went once more to look at the plane, and then walked to the edge of the snow plain, looking up the slight rise. If the plane had landed up-slope, Bob surely would have left it there to be seen. Stan walked clear of the trees.

His webs began to settle unevenly through the new fall of snow. Several times he almost fell when one side of the snowshoes sank lower than the other. He discovered the reason finally—yesterday the top of the old snow had melted a little in the morning; in the afternoon it had frozen, and now he was stumbling over the dents of his old tracks.

Preserved under the new snow, at least until a real thaw came, was a record of all his movements. It had been a clear day when Bob left Ibex. How warm, before the snow came?

Removing his pack Stan cut a limb from one of the firs with his heavy pocket knife. He trimmed all the feather branches off. With that as a probe he went out on the snow field, right up the middle.

Careful punching with the limb sounded the frozen dents of his own tracks, but the limb was only two feet long. Below the crust of yesterday it reached nothing but softness. Stan went back to the plane for one of Bob's skis.

Quite slowly he pushed the straight end of the ski into the snow. After ten or twelve soundings he was almost sure of a thin crust about three feet down. He scratched a mark across the ski and kept trying. There were slight variations and sometimes he struck rocks but after an hour he was sure: uniformly close to three feet below the surface was a frozen strata.

In two places there seemed to be an extra heavy crust down there. Stan found three places that felt the same. They were in a line. He marked them with his cap and mittens. When he found eight places in a line he thought he might be tracing the track of one of the skis of the plane. He went back to the plane and dug until he could measure the distance between the landing slats with the ski.

Soundings to the left of his established line touched only the thin crusts, one at eight inches and the older one about three feet from the top. To the right of his line, at the distance between the landing skis, he encountered heavier resistance that indicated a cementing of thawing crystals by cold after they had been crushed together.

More probings told him he had another straight line.

Not knowing snow, working strictly from a theory, although it seemed to be proving itself, he moved carefully, not yet accepting conclusions. With small branches he marked both lines of hardness touched by the end of the ski below the surface. The distance between the lengthening parallel marks was always the distance between the landing skis of the plane.

AT NOON he did not stop to eat. He was certain by then that he had found the landing marks of Bob's plane. The legal side of his mind told him he had found nothing. As he continued his tracing he introduced the experiment in a theoretical court of law.

"Are you an expert on snow conditions, Mr. Stan?"

"No."

"Do you have the rputation of being an expert on such matters?"

"No."

"You admit then that you cannot speak with positive assurance of the physical changes that occur beneath snow?"

"Yes."

"At the time you found these—ah—somewhat esoteric—marks below the snow, did you know how many times it had snowed and thawed between the day the plane came down and the day you conduct-

ed your unusual investigation with—what was it you said? A ski?"

"No, I do not know how many times it snowed and thawed during the interim."

"Does anyone know—for that particularly limited area you explored?"

"I don't know."

That was the way it would go in a court of law.

Suddenly Stan felt nothing but the thin crust three feet down. He looked back at the long lines of branches. They did not extend clear to the firs, but even a lawyer could admit that the plane was in the trees, and must have reached its present position by sliding there from the end of the marked course.

He rested for several minutes, wiping vapor from his colored glasses, squinting up at the mighty dorsal fins on Dinosaur. The mountain had nothing to hide—it was friendly now.

All at once Stan realized that the staked lines were not in the middle of the snow field all the way to where he stood. He was close to the toe of the mountain. It was reasonable to assume that a pilot landing downhill would not have crowded the rocks so closely—if he could have avoided doing so.

He probed to the west, out toward the edge of the field, where it hung above trees five hundred feet below. Soon he was feeling a confusion of crusts and hardness under him. Gradually he made sense from the marks.

The plane had landed uphill, veering toward the mountain to leave room to turn. Then it had turned, and it had gone toward the trees, as far as Stan could determine, in the same ski marks it had made in landing.

It was not a takeoff that had failed, or the plane would not be resting gently now. His dissatisfaction with the easy position of the craft was justified.

What did he have from that, besides greater dissatisfaction and unease?

The sun was gone from the top of Dinosaur now. He had spent a whole day proving something to himself, and now he wondered if he would have been better off not knowing.

Once more he began probing where he thought the plane had started its turn. Yes, there was definitely a turn here. Why?

The end of the ski found resistance and then compressed it and came against something hard. It was not like breaking through a crust and then striking a rock, as Stan had done many times this day. He tried again and found something soft, which gave slowly, and then became rock-hard.

With one foot resting on the ski he dug with a snowshoe. The snow kept sliding back into the hole. It sifted through the web like powder. Now and then he punched with the ski. There was something odd down there, all right.

He dug Bob's body from the snow a half hour later.

UNDER his breath Stan said, without blasphemy, "Gentle Jesus Christ!"

Bob's hands were clasped across his stomach. Around them and under them was a mass of snow bound together with blood. His face was set in agony.

Stan could not lift the doubled form clear of the hole. He went to the plane and got the blanket there and covered Bob with that, and then, to keep the blanket from blowing away, he pushed snow over it.

For the last time he thrust the ski into the snow, to mark the place.

It was too late now to make even a start toward Ibex. Light winked on the window of the red plane as Stan went past on his way to his camp site. His mind was full of speculation, but he sheered hard away from quick conclusions.

Bob was dead. How or why were matters that must wait on evidence. Stan could look at some facts with detachment but a dozen times he awoke in the utter blackness of his tent that night, thinking of how curious he had been when he kept pushing a ski against the folds of a down jacket underneath the snow.

Only the bleak thought of dawn light was in the trees when he crawled out of the tent the next morning. He ate and made ready for the trip. Before he left he went to the plane and probed around it with another ski, but there was nothing to read down there. In the shade of the trees there had been no thaw, probably, since the first snow fell.

From the edge of the plain he looked up his lines of brances. Wind was sprinting close to the snow, and the little markers were waving. He had worried about his

other marker drifting over, but it was there, a black edge far up the field.

Taking the second ski with him he started toward Ibex. If anyone had been with Bob, he would have left on skis or webs. Along what seemed to be the natural route there were more clumps of trees and great rocks ripping upward from the slopes of snow. Too much shade, Stan thought, but he tried with the ski, and he found nothing; so he left a second piece of beautiful craftsmanship upright in the snow, marking failure.

CHAPTER 2

"YOU one of the guys surveying the new power line to the synthetic fuel plant?" Earle Brown was the manager of the airport operated by the Briley Hotel in Ibex. He was a young man with a crew cut and, like everyone else in Ibex, he wore ski togs. Stan's clothing was bothering him.

"No. I want to know who left with Bob Stan when his plane took off from here last February."

"Oh!" Brown stared at Stan's features. "You're his father, huh? You look a whole lot—"

"I'm his brother."

"Excuse me. That beard and all. . . . He took off alone, Mr. Stan."

"You know that yourself?"

"I gassed the plane—" Brown pointed—"right over there on the snow runway. Well, it was snow then. Sure, he was by himself. Is there any news on him?"

Stan said, "No. Nothing yet."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Stan. He was a great guy."

A kid like that really meant such words, Stan thought. He felt a pang because of not telling Brown the truth.

"He might have got somewhere," Brown said. "Maybe he pancaked into some thick spruces, and. . . . There's a few trappers on the other side of Dinosaur. I don't suppose they've got radios. He had an emergency kit." Brown let the thought sag away when Stan turned to look out of the window at the runways.

"What was in the emergency kit, do you know?" Stan asked.

"Bob's was sort of made-up. He had some Army rations and stuff like that, a twenty-two pistol, some flares, bandages and a little medicine—quite a bunch of stuff."

"You saw those things?"

"No, he told me. I knew Bob pretty well. We went fishing here together a few times. He always flew over for the ski meets. He was headed for international competition this year."

"Yes, he was. Did he have this emergency kit with him when he left here the last time?"

"I guess he did."

"You didn't see it?"

"Well—I didn't notice it particularly, I guess, but I know he never flew without it."

"Please don't mind if I dig hard, Mr. Brown," Stan said. "I'm trying to find out all I can, so some of my questions will seem blunt."

"I don't mind, Mr. Stan."

"I know the reports all say he left here alone. Is there any possibility that someone, say a skiing friend, decided to go with him at the last moment?"

"Jack Nissen mentioned it, but he was only kidding. He said something about flying back with Bob to Gateway and then going on out to the intercollegiate meet at Alta Vista and showing the college boys how to jump. That's where Bob's team was, and that's why he left here before the Kuss meet was completely over."

Bob had been the captain of College of the West's ski team. He had planned to join the team at Alta Vista for a meet that began the day the Kuss Championships ended.

"Nissen mentioned going with him, facetiously, but no one did go with him?"

Brown shook his head. "I watched him strap his skis down. He got in the pilot's seat and I closed the door. He was alone, Mr. Stan."

"Do you recall how many pairs of skis he had?"

"Three or four."

"Would you cut that to two pairs?"

Brown considered the question. "No. He had more than four slats piled in that red job. How's all this going to help find Bob?"

"It applies to certain insurance aspects. You fly, don't you, Mr. Brown?"

"Yes."

"What would cause you to land in the mountains, not considering necessity?"

"A naked gal swimming in a beaver pond." Brown's grin faded when he saw no response. "If there wasn't any necessity I just wouldn't land. I'm not like Jack Bunner over in Gateway and some others I know. The ceiling on these real light jobs just isn't enough for the main range. They go through all the time, yes. They do it by such things as shooting the notch on the north end of Dinosaur Mountain, or stalling around until a rising thermal gives them altitude that wasn't built into the plane. But if you got a One-ninety, say—"

"Would you land if you saw a distress signal?"

"That depends on the signal. There's all kinds. It depends more on whether you *could* land. It's a tough question to answer, Mr. Stan."

"I see that it is. Who is Jack Nissen?"

"He's a jumper from one of the uranium teams."

"Uranium teams?"

"Yeah, you know—guys from those atomic smelters and plants down in the southwest part of the state got some good ski teams. We call 'em the uranium teams."

"I see. Was Nissen a particular friend of Bob's?"

"No. Just one of the crowd that came down to see Bob take off."

"Do you remember the others that came?"

"Joe Kesselheim, from Denver University—he's their big gun in the downhill. Hansen and Lubeck from Winter Park. Bill Jackson—he's Western State's terrific jumper. Some others, too. There was quite a crowd. I can't remember all of them."

"It isn't important." Stan hesitated. "Was Bob involved with any woman here?"

"Involved?" Brown grinned. "Well, he sort of kept in training during the meets. You don't run a downhill off Kuss with a dame on your back. Of course there's always stuff hanging around these meets, like movie stars in five hundred dollar outfits. They have their pictures taken with Sven Herigstaad. Ski jockeys are healthy louts, Mr. Stan. They attract women, sort of."

"There was someone?"

"Bob kidded around some, but I think he kept in training. He was damned serious about skiing. Billie Nadon sort of hung around him during the Kuss, but that's about all she got out of it."

"She was not a participant in the meet?"

"No, she lives here—sometimes. She's got a lodge. She's here now. She'll probably be around the Briley tonight."

"Who is Sven Herigstaad?"

"I see you don't ski, Mr. Stan, the way you pronounce that name. He's the hotel's instructor. He runs the Kuss Championships, and smiles at the fat women who ride the lift up the hill to the sundeck."

"Thank you, Mr. Brown. Could I buy you a dinner tonight at the hotel?"

"You could—but I got a date to go skiing up the Tumbling River in the moonlight."

"Another time then. Thank you again."

"They'll find him this summer or fall, maybe. He was a great guy, Mr. Stan. I'm sorry about it."

ON THE porch outside the administration building Stan watched a small red plane go down a runway. It lifted with a bounce and began to slant toward a clear sky, going straight down the valley.

Bob's plane was huddled in a thicket, cold, with no sunlight on its wings. . . .

From his window in the Briley, Stan looked at melting snow on the packed fan at the bottom of Kuss Run. He thought the main surge was over, or the clerk would not have given him a room that looked out on the course for a mere fifteen dollars.

There were skiers halfway up the course, and that was possibly a thousand feet above the town. The lift went on and on and disappeared over Ibex Mountain. Three miles of it, the clerk had said. Somewhere around the sundeck at the top Stan could find Herigstaad in the morning, the clerk said. At the moment the instructor was ten miles away, at one of the hotel's lodges.

The room was hot. Stan was in his shorts, his skin tingling from his first shower in two weeks. He put in a call to Gateway, dressing in his heavy woolen clothes while he waited for the connection.

Jack Bunner said, "Mountain Flying Service," and then a little later: "How'd you get clear over there?"

"I walked. Do you have a plane with skis?"

"I can put 'em on. Why?"

"I'll be in Gateway day after tomorrow. There's a place between here and there where I would like to have you land me."

"I won't guarantee landing, but I'll look it over with you. You found something?"

"No, but I want to look."

"Day after tomorrow. All right. I could come over the hill tomorrow, if you want me to pick you up there."

"I have some other business," Stan said. "I'll take the train from here. Will your plane with skis carry three?"

"Four."

"Day after tomorrow then, whenever you're ready to start."

"Check. I still don't say I'll go down where you show me, unless it's safe."

Billie Nadon was expensive looking, blonde, and comfortably drunk. The last fact was the most difficult to detect. She was at the Briley bar with a fat man dressed in ski clothing and a pale skin. Somewhere behind her drunkenness there were cool depths, for she sized up Stan's clothes first and then his freshly-shaved face when he introduced himself.

"Stan?" she said. "Norman Stan?"

"Bob's brother."

"Oh! The downhill man with the great big smile. Simply fabulous, that boy—" She caught herself. "I forgot for a moment, Mr. Stan." She used her companion to bridge the gap. "My friend, Mr. Endsley, Mr. Stan."

The two men nodded bleakly at each other.

"Sit down, Mr. Stan." Billie Nadon looked at his clothes again. "A drink?"

"No thank you." Stan took a stool beside the woman. "During the Kuss Championships here did you notice anything erratic in my brother's behavior?"

"Erratic? He was fabulous, Mr. Stan. He laughed and ribbed all the Norwegians, and went down the Kuss like it was a practice slope. He was fabulous, Mr. Stan."

"You were rather close to him, Miss Nadon?"

"We danced sometimes. I watched him on the course. Is that what you mean by being rather close?"

"I suppose. You saw nothing then in his behavior to indicate he was moody?"

"You sound like a lawyer, Mr. Stan. Why no, Bob was as happy as a divorcee just off the hook. I saw him get sharp with Jack Nissen a time or two, but that didn't seem to mean anything."

"He and Nissen were great friends?"

"No. Nissen merely elected himself as Bob's keeper. Nissen probably thinks he coached Bob into winning the downhill." She sipped her drink. "I'm terribly sorry about Bob, Mr. Stan. Has there been any news?"

"No news."

The woman turned to Endsley. "Bob's plane was lost."

Endsley blinked. He said, "Oh?"

"Did you happen to go to the airport with him, Miss Nadon?" Stan asked.

"Mrs. Nadon. No, I didn't."

SVEN HERIGSTAAD exuded tan and vitality. Stan thought he might be a man who would hum happily while skiing down the fearful run off Ibex Mountain. The ride up on the lift had been enough to make Stan gulp.

Herigstaad was showing a girl how to make turns on a gentle slope a hundred yards away from a huge log and stone building that was called a sundeck. He showed the girl how to turn and moments later he told her how to rise from a spill. Stan waited, glancing now and then toward Dinosaur Mountain—it had been much easier coming from there than he had expected.

There were several pretty girls on the slope, but eventually they were all down at the same time. Stan got over to Herigstaad by walking on a ribbon of packed snow.

"No, no!" Herigstaad said. His eyes were bright blue, his accent thick. "Stan was very happy during the meet. From this he would be picked for the European contests. So he was happy. Why not?" He shook his head violently at a floundering student. "With the pole! Use the pole, miss!"

"He and Jack Nissen were quite close here, I understand."

"Oh no! In the downhill Nissen fell. He was twenty-third. Stan was first."

"I mean Nissen and Jack developed a

very close acquaintanceship during the meet. They were together a great deal, weren't they?"

"No." Herigstaad scowled at one of his wallowing girls. "Push against the snow with the pole, miss! That is, I do not think so, Mr. Stan. I am very busy at these meets, and for a while I thought the snow was not to be just good." He nodded. "Yes, it might be that Stan and Nissen became great friends. There was a girl, a woman, I remember. She does not ski, but she was with Nissen and Stan very much."

"Mrs. Nadon?"

"Yes. She was with Stan most, not the other skiers. She—" Herigstaad waved his arms at a girl down the slope. "Up, up, miss. We do not ski upon the back."

"I do!" the girl called.

"Excuse me, please." Herigstaad went down the slope.

Stan went back to the sundeck. People in dark glasses watched him curiously as he walked past their chairs on the concrete porch that ran all around the building. At the snack bar he ate a hamburger sandwich, extremely small, expertly cooked. It cost seventy-five cents. The cup of coffee cost a quarter.

He found a vacant canvas chair on the east side of the porch, next to a middle-aged woman who was telling her husband he needed exercise.

Herigstaad had said no instantly when Stan asked about Nissen's and Bob's sudden friendship. Witnesses often spoke like that, vehemently; then realizing they had answered too quickly, qualified their statement or reversed it.

"It's so clear and beautiful up here, John," the woman said. "Just like it was during the Kuss meet, with the sun so nice—"

"It snowed too."

"Only on the last day."

"Just the same, it snowed."

Stan was looking across miles of whiteness at a saddle. It had snowed over there too, on the last day of the Kuss Championships. He had beaten his own estimate by coming from the saddle in one day—he wondered how quickly a good skier could travel the distance.

He rode the lift back down the mountain. The trip scared him more than coming up.

From the telephone office he called Bunner and told him he would be in Gateway two days later than first planned. Bob would not mind, but the thought of him doubled up under the blanket, beneath a bleak snow field, cursed the delay.

Jack Nissen was a slender, frank-faced man. He was a welder at the Uranium Extraction Corporation in Durango. He came to the personnel office in his working clothes. The guard who had accompanied him stayed close, and so did the guard who had escorted Stan from the gate.

The personnel director's name was E. J. Coplon. He said, "Nissen, this is Norman Stan, a brother of Robert Stan."

"Bob's brother." Nissen shook hands. His gaze was straight and clean. Sympathy began to creep into it. "That was too bad, Mr. Stan."

"What was too bad?"

Nissen looked surprised. "About Bob—going down like that."

"Like what, Mr. Nissen?"

"His plane crashing, I mean."

"Did it?" Stan asked gently.

Nissen looked inquiringly at Coplon, and then he looked at Stan once more. "What's the pitch, Mr. Stan?"

"I'm sorry. I've been under a heavy strain, and my manners have suffered."

Stan rubbed his hand across his forehead.

"Sure, I understand," Nissen said. "Have they found him?"

Still rubbing his forehead, not looking at Nissen, Stan said. "No. It seems to be hopeless." He had confused Nissen a little at first, and put him on guard; a man who thought he was on guard was often more vulnerable than when surprised. Even the innocent must defend themselves. In Nissen's case there were conflicting views regarding his association with Bob. Stan tried to hold to that, for neither innocence nor guilt was involved —yet. He appraised Nissen—a man definitely set behind a defense now; a man who would examine his answers critically before delivery. Why?

"Sven Herigstaad and Billie Nadon told me you and Bob were quite good friends, Mr. Nissen."

Stan saw it clearly—Nissen was considering what might have been said.

"We just sort of ran together at the Kuss."

"Herigstaad said you were quite close."

That worried Nissen. Something screwed

down a little tighter in his mind. "Well, I guess Bob and I did stick pretty tight over there."

Given time, with him on a witness stand, I could break him, Stan thought. He said, "You knew Bob from other ski meets, of course?"

"Yes." Nissen said it instantly.

"But at the Kuss you became very good friends immediately?"

Nissen took more time now. "Not immediately, Mr. Stan. You see, I had reservation trouble. Bob and Bill Jackson let me move in with them after the first night of the meet. After that, Bob and I were pretty much together."

"You saw him off at the airport?"

"Yeah. I kidded him about slipping me in as a cow jumper out at Alta Vista, where he was headed."

"Cow jumper?"

"College of the West." Coplon smiled.

"How many pairs of skis did he have, Mr. Nissen?"

Nissen answered instantly, "Three, as usual."

"That wasn't important, I guess," Stan said. "The whole object of my questioning was to determine if possible if my brother was depressed at the time of his flight. I'm sure now that you would have known. Was he?"

"Depressed? You mean he might have—" Nissen shook his head. "No, nothing like that. He was a happy guy, Mr. Stan."

"I hope so." Stan frowned. "He was subject to spells of extreme depression. Few people knew about it. You did not notice anything that might have indicated what I just mentioned?"

Bob had been aware of life and full of living it from the time he was born. The door was open now for Nissen to step in with a furnished contradiction of his previous statement. He did not choose to make the step.

"No," he said. "I didn't notice anything like that."

"Thank you, Mr. Nissen. I feel relieved. I won't take any more of your time."

Nissen went out with a thoughtful expression in his eyes.

Coplon said, "I remember now, from reading the papers. My son was lost in the last war, flying the Hump. He was never found, Mr. Stan. I think I can understand how you feel."

The two men were silent for several moments.

"Do all the plants of this kind have ski teams, Mr. Coplon?"

"There aren't any other plants exactly like this one. Do you mean the other government atomic production industries?"

"Well, yes, installations such as the synthetic fuel plant over in the shale country also."

"A good many of them do have sports teams, Mr. Stan. It's part of a recreational setup. Whether or not it's essential I don't know, but it exists."

BILL JACKSON, the Western State jumper, was a soft-spoken man who looked fragile in his street clothes. The dean of men had caught him in a hallway between classes, and now Stan talked to Jackson in a music room where a lone piano stood against cracking plaster.

"He brushed the woman off pretty well, I thought," Jackson said. "She tried for Lars Enbom after that. Bob was a serious skier, Mr. Stan. He wasn't like the old tennis bums you read about."

"He was quite friendly with Jack Nissen, wasn't he?"

"Nissen hung onto him, but Bob didn't care too much for him, from what he told me."

"What did Bob tell you, Mr. Jackson?"

"He said, 'What is it with that Nissen? You'd think he was my bodyguard.' Something like that. Nissen moved in with Bob and me the second night. He slept on a cot. He'd been on another floor, but there was a ball-up in reservations and they were going to make him pay twenty bucks a night, so we told him he could move in with us."

"He suggested the idea?"

"He moaned about the way he was getting stuck. Nobody pays expenses for those uranium teams. To get him off the hook we took him in."

"You yourself didn't like Nissen?"

"No, I don't mean that. He was all right, a darned good downhill man too. He wasn't loud or anything like that, but you just couldn't get away from him. At least,

Bob couldn't. He got in Bob's hair before it was over."

"This started on the second day of the Kuss?"

"Yeah, in the afternoon."

"What do you think of Sven Herigstaad, Mr. Jackson?"

"Oh, man! That guy schusses places where the rest of us don't go at all."

"Was he ever away from the meet for any length of time you recall?"

"No. He was up the hill and down the hill and all over the place every minute that I know of. He runs the Kuss. Does a wonderful job too."

"When you saw Bob off at the airport, where was Earle Brown?"

"I don't know him."

"The airport manager."

"There was a guy with a gas truck that went out on the snow runway. He talked to Bob a minute or two after the rest of us got out of the way. Then Bob took off and circled and wagged his wings, and that was it."

"That was Brown. Do you recall that he leaned into the plane, and later closed the door?"

Jackson nodded. "Yeah, he did. He was standing on a little business like a tall pullman step. He shut the door and thumbed his nose at Bob. Bob grinned. The guy pulled the step clear and went over to the truck."

"How many pairs of skis did Bob have?"

"Three."

"When he left?"

Jackson nodded.

"Do you recall anything on the first day of that meet that indicated Bob was worried, or suddenly unduly thoughtful about something?"

After a while Jackson said, "No. At a meet Bob didn't think of anything but skiing. He could have been worried about something, but it never would have shown."

"Did he compete the first day?"

"No. I think he was up on top, working out. There were a couple of girls with him, or watching him, most of that day, he said Then this Nadon dame scared 'em off."

"Did you know the girls?"

"Two women from C.O.W. One of them was a figure skater. She was in the night carnival at the rink near the hotel. I don't remember their names."

"You're sure, however, that they were from the College of the West?"

"Bob said so. The public address system at the carnival said so too."

Stan smiled. "I'll accept the fact, Mr. Jackson. I'm sorry I caused you to miss part of a class."

Jackson grinned. "Survey of English Literature. I could miss a lot of it." He walked with Stan to a door that opened on a flight of stone steps. "I'm sorry about Bob, Mr. Stan. He was one of the best."

"Thank you, Mr. Jackson." They shook hands.

Stan went down the steps. It looked like spring on the sloping campus, but the air was colder than it had been beside Dinosaur's long back.

In the middle of the night Stan came into Gateway on a bus. Since leaving Ibex he had traveled more than five hundred miles. Once more he was only thirty-five airline miles from Ibex.

STUDENTS going to eight o'clock classes at College of the West paid little attention to the well-dressed man in the registrar's office. Stan had spoken at the school once, at commencement exercises, but that, like many other things, was in the past.

The registrar said the figure skater who had been at Ibex was Mary Lou Callaghan, and the girl who had been with her probably was Jane Moss. They did not have a class until nine that morning.

Stan went to the courthouse. He knew Sheriff Enos Linke from a mining case that had dragged its way into the supreme court of the state after seven years in lower courts. Stan was willing to take a chance on Linke; he hoped the sheriff would feel the same toward him.

Linke was just unlocking his office. He remembered Stan instantly. The sheriff was a dapper little man. His reddish hair was close-cropped, his face flat-cheeked and firm. He was sixty-two years old, and was now living with his third wife.

"A half hour earlier and you could have had breakfast with me and the kids, Mr. Stan. Have you had your breakfast yet?"

Stan said, "Thank you, I ate." He sat down. He was tired and he wished he could have slept until noon. Concisely, he told Linke what he had discovered near

the northern end of Dinosaur. "That's in your county isn't it, Mr. Linke?"

"Just barely." Linke waited. "Go on."

"Jack Bunner is flying me up there today. We'll bring Bob back. I don't want it known for a while."

"Why?"

Stan told him, heightening certain aspects of the story with comments of his own.

"Yes," Linke said. "It does begin to point up pretty filthy. Maybe it's too big for us."

"That could be, but first I want a medical report on Bob. Is there a doctor here you can trust?"

Linke nodded.

They settled other details. "Bunner's plane has four seats. Do you want to go with us, Sheriff?"

Linke shook his head. "I do my flying with the airlines, or else I stick to the ground. You young fellows—"

"This will be my first flight in a light plane," Stan said.

Linke nodded. "Good luck to you. I'll have everything ready here."

Mary Lou Callaghan and Janie Moss were not pretty girls; Stan wondered why he had thought they would be. He talked to them at a desk in the registrar's office.

Mary Lou said, "Yes, we followed him around for a day or two. He was the only C.O.W. man over there, and then that Nadon hag latched onto him, so we just dropped the whole thing. I mean, except for watching him in the races."

"Was Jack Nissen with Bob a great deal the first day?"

The two girls looked at each other. Janie said, "The cute little uranium jumper with the dimples?"

"Uh-huh." Mary Lou nodded. "That was he. No, Mr. Stan, we didn't even see Jack Nissen on top where Bob was practicing. Herigstaad was there, sometimes. He and Bob jabbered at each other in Swedish or Norwegian when they first met. Herigstaad seemed rather sore about something for a minute, but then he started smiling and shaking his head."

"They knew each other before that, of course?"

"I don't think so," Mary Lou said. "The Briley just hired Herigstaad last summer. He's an exchange scholar, or an exchange something, like our ski coach here, Lars Wilke."

"Nissen is both a jumper and a downhill man, I take it?" Stan asked. It was a small point, but he liked all points to be clear.

Both girls nodded.

"How long would you say Bob and Herigstaad talked Swedish or Norwegian to each other—a minute or so?"

"They jabbered several sentences," Mary Lou said. "I guess they were sentences."

"Do either of you girls speak Swedish or Norwegian?"

Jane smiled at Mary Lou. "Schuss!" Jane said. "Is that Norwegian?"

Some minutes later Stan was talking to Lars Wilke, a whip-like man with curly yellow hair. Wilke's eyes were puckered as if he were right now squinting at a snowy hill. His accent was at least twice as heavy as Herigstaad's.

"You are Bob's brother." Wilke shook his head. "Poor Bob, my best one of all. They don't find him yet?"

"No, Mr. Wilke. You are—ah—Scandinavian?"

"Norwegian, please!"

"Yes, I'm sorry. Did Bob speak your language?"

"The words of skiing, yes, but not the language."

"A few expressions, enough to make a sentence?"

"No. Just the words of skiing."

"Did he speak Swedish?"

"No, no!"

There was one foreign language that Bob did speak, not well, but well enough to be understood. Russian. He had learned by a quick method in an Army school before he was assigned to a bomber group in Alaska during the Second World War.

He had been stationed at a base where Russian pilots came to take delivery of planes presented by the United States in a war against a common enemy. The Russians had been aloof, Bob had said, staying close to their assigned quarters, herded always by one of their group who often carried lesser insignia than the pilots.

From them, Bob said, he had never learned anything to justify the Army's teaching him Russian.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Wilke."

"You will find Bob?"

"I hope so."

"Too long," Wilke said. "It is too long now."

CHAPTER 3

THE plane had been hauled six miles out of town, to where a sage flat on the north side of a hill was still deep in snow. Bunner said, "All right, where's this place you want to look at?"

"Just left of the saddle at the north end of Dinosaur."

"We started rock slides on Dinosaur going back and forth along there. Maybe I can land there. It's one of the few places I'd consider." Bunner looked curiously at the brand-new rake Stan was holding. He lashed it down in the plane.

To an assistant waiting in a jeep Bunner said, "You won't have to come out when you see us come back. Mr. Stan has a friend who's going to meet us here."

Stan got in. Bunner checked the controls. He looked behind him at empty seats. "Who was the third guy you had in mind when you asked about three places?"

"Bob."

Bunner jerked his head around. "My God!"

"Take off."

The snow was heavy, even in the shade. The plane stayed down until it seemed to Stan that the barbed wire fence ahead was going to trip them end over end; but they lifted and made two great circles above Gateway.

"You're not getting me into some kind of jam, are you?" Bunner was worried. For a cold-eyed man with fourteen years of mountain flying behind him, he was perhaps unduly concerned, Stan thought.

"A jam? What do you mean, Bunner?"

"Well, this whole thing suddenly becomes damned mysterious. Who's going to meet us when we come back?"

"Enos Linke."

"What for?"

"That will be determined later."

"I've got a good business and a good reputation, Mr. Stan. I've a notion to go back, until I find out just what's doing."

"... IMAGINE ME dancing with a scarecrow! How can he be so careless about his hair? It's straggly, unkempt, and ... Oh-oh—loose dandruff! He's got Dry Scalp, all right. He needs 'Vaseline' Hair Tonic."

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HE TOOK HER TIP, and look at his hair now! 'Vaseline' Hair Tonic can do as much for you. Just a few drops a day check loose dandruff ... keep hair naturally good-looking. It contains no alcohol or other drying ingredients. Gives double care to both scalp and hair ... and it's economical, too!

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"You will find out, in time. Right now, put it across that saddle and then land where it strikes you as the best place to land."

Bunner pointed at an instrument when they started toward the saddle, with Dinosaur's sharp granite waiting on their left. They were doing forty-five air miles an hour.

Bunner banked the plane suddenly to the right. It seemed to hang without motion for a while, but ice-streaked rocks of the lesser mountain were rushing toward its belly. Stan gripped his seat hard. The plane appeared to be drifting close to the rocks, and then all at once it was facing the sun and they were rushing over a great depth above green trees.

Their air speed then was seventy miles an hour.

"What happened?" Stan asked.

"Why, hell, the wind was blowing ninety miles an hour through the saddle. I'd have stalled out like a ruptured duck in another minute."

He made a circle and went back. This time Bunner had to reduce engine speed before the plane was through the saddle. He made two circles, one going up beside the spine of Dinosaur, the second coming back.

From here the snow field was larger than Stan had thought, except the narrow part where Bob's plane had landed. That seemed to be just a tiny strip that poised beside an abyss. The clump of firs was scarcely anything at all. Even on the third circling, when the plane passed quite close above the trees, Stan could see nothing in them.

The plane whistled down. A gust of snow was rolling along the field. They went in as easily as any of the liners Stan had ridden. There, not ten feet to his right, was the ski that marked remembrance.

"Now what?" Bunner asked.

"Take your snowshoes and go down into that clump of trees. I want your report on what you'll find there.'

"I haven't got any snowshoes."

"I told you when I called early this morning."

"You bought the last pair in town. The telephone company had some, but they weren't lending them. I forgot to mention it before we started."

"Can you ski?"

"A little."

Stan went to the plane and came back with a pair of skis and the poles. Bunner put on the skis and went down the snow field slowly. When he returned Stan had used the rake to dredge up a canvas bag from the snow. Bob's name was stencilled on it. Inside were the articles Earle Brown had named—and other items too.

There was an odd expression on Bunner's face. "That plane would start," he said. "There isn't a damned thing wrong—" He stared at the bag. "That's Bob emergency kit! Where'd you find it?"

Stan pointed at the snow. "If you were stranded here and you wanted a plane to land, what would you do?"

"I'd use hand signals if he was coming low to look me over."

"He isn't. He's going over, headed into the saddle."

"Then I'd make a signal on the snow."

"Where?"

Bunner looked up, and then he looked toward the saddle. He pointed. "Right out there."

It was not long before Stan pulled from the layer of crust three feet below a fir branch encrusted with coarse snow. The end of the branch had been cut with a heavy knife or an ax.

"What would the signal be, most likely?" he asked Bunner.

"Maybe a triangle. Here, let me dig a while with that rake."

It was a triangle. Bunner said it meant: *Probably safe to land.* Later, to the left of the triangle, he found a straight line made with branches. '"Serious injury, need a doctor.' Damn it all! What happened here?"

Stan said, "I don't know."

They took Bob's body from the snow, lifting it in the blanket. Bunner removed two seats in the plane and they got the body aboard. Each hard bumping noise made Stan wince.

"Some dirty louse!" Bunner cried. "He made the signals. Bob landed, got out with his skis and the kit. . . . Some dirty louse!"

"We don't know that, Bunner."

"I'll take it now, without any more evidence."

"Where would you say the skis are?"

Bunner pointed. There was a slight tip

to the snow field toward the trees far below in the abyss.

THEY returned to the sage flat outside of Gateway. Linke was waiting there with a station wagon.

"Stan told you to keep quiet, did he, Bunner?"

Bunner nodded. Linke let him out at the airport. Bunner glanced at the cargo doors of the station wagon, and then walked slowly toward his office.

"When can your doctor—"

"He said maybe forty-eight hours before he can do anything." The sheriff barely paused. "If you don't mind kids, come over to my place and stay. The wife's away right now. Got lots of room, Stan."

"Thanks, I will."

Death from a bullet wound, Dr. Reynold Curtis said fifty-four hours later. It had penetrated the intestines and shredded a section of the liver. There were powder burns on Bob's down jacket. The caliber of the bullet probably had been .38 or larger. Death had not been instantaneous. Dr. Curtis was clipped and incisive, but he looked away from Stan when he made the last statement.

Stan and Linke locked themselves in the sheriff's office.

"It spreads too wide for us," Linke said. "On top of the fact that none of the evidence is hard-boiled. I think you're pointing straight at the truth. Bob recognized Sven Herigstaad from some previous association—we can't even guess what that was—but it wasn't good. Herigstaad put Nissen on Bob to watch him day and night, to hear every word he said from then on. Bob was too taken with the meet to bother with anything else, but sooner or later he was going to mention what he knew.

"Maybe it worked on Herigstaad's nerves when Bob didn't do anything, or even try to do anything. Somebody waited at the saddle. Bob went down to answer a distress signal. He didn't have a chance. By summer, when somebody *might* have found him, Doc Curtis says there wouldn't have been much chance of saying how he died. That's why the fellow made no pretense of wrecking the plane.

"Another reason, Bunner says, is because he might have banged the propeller into a tree and got hurt by something coming through the windshield. There was no point in smashing the plane, anyway. The fellow knew a snow was coming. All he was interested in was getting the plane under cover and skiing back to Ibex.

"Lars Wilke says he took the cross-country team from here to Ibex winter before this. They didn't go through the saddle, but he knows where it is. Lars says he thinks he could go from the saddle to Ibex in no more than two hours."

"I expect that's true," Stan said. "Herigstaad couldn't have been missing from the meet four or five hours, say, and we know Nissen wasn't."

"That's what I mean when I say it spreads too wide. I think you've put your finger smack on the truth, Stan, but I couldn't pick up my worst enemy on the evidence." Linke paused. "Shall I call the Federal Bureau on it?"

Stan nodded. "Talk to Woodman." He took a thin blue notebook from his pocket and consulted it. "Use this number. Don't mention F.B.I. at all."

"I catch a car thief once in a while," Linke said. "I'm not too smart, but I wasn't going to blat everything into the phone."

Roy Woodman did not send a special agent from his office; he came himself by plane that afternoon, surprising both Linke and Stan when he walked up the courthouse steps. Woodman was a former lawyer, a round-faced man with large dark eyes and thinning hair. Throughout the story Stan told him, it was impossible to pick a point where Woodman showed any expression beyond polite attentiveness.

"You imply then that your brother recognized Sven Herigstaad, perhaps as a former Russian pilot?" Woodman's tone neither supported nor attacked the theory.

Stan nodded.

"Have you talked more than once to the two girls at the college here, the two who saw the meeting?"

"No."

Woodman wrote down the girls' names. "So far, Mr. Linke, there is no one eligible for murder charges?"

Linke said, "No, damn it."

The F.B.I. man rose. "I'll try to get in touch with you gentlemen in a few days."

They knew he went to the college, that he went to see Dr. Curtis, that he talked to

Jack Bunner—and then late in the afternoon Woodman picked up his pilot and flew back across the mountains.

Linke said, "How do you like that?"

"I think he knew a great deal more than we do about certain aspects of the problem," Stan said. "He got here very soon after your call. Don't you worry, Sheriff, events are moving fast right now."

"That's what I'm afraid of," Linke said. "Suppose some of those birds you questioned flock up?"

Stan was worried too. Nissen was a weak spot—he might have run to Herigstaad already.

WOODMAN'S plane raced in two days later, just ahead of a wet snow that melted as fast as the flakes struck the ground. He brought two agents with him, Thomas Clarke and William Accola. The five men held a conference in Linke's office.

"Sven Herigstaad is not a Norwegian," Woodman said. "He's a German, one of the orphans taken in by the Norwegians after the first world war. He was brought up in Oslo. Some of those orphans were used by Hitler to betray Norway in the second world war, but Herigstaad had gone sour in the other direction long before that.

"He attended youth conferences in Moscow. His foster father booted him out. Herigstaad was flying a plane for the Russians when the second world war began. Whether he ever ferried planes from Alaska to Siberia, we don't know. We have known for some time that he is the dumping point for information being gathered from six or more government plants in this area by men on ski teams.

"They are not getting any single pieces of vital information, we think, but the coordination of everything that comes to Herigstaad has no doubt given him a clear picture of some of our trends and developments in science. When that is fitted into a larger picture supplied by other foreign agents all over the country, it is dangerous."

Woodman lit a cigarette carefully. One of Linke's girls shook the locked door and yelled, "Daddy! I want to see you." Linke told her to come back later, but she kept insisting; and so the conference waited while Linke went into the hall and told the girl she could stay at Betty Jo's that night, if she helped to do the dishes before leaving.

"So far we think Herigstaad has not been able to transmit detailed information to others," Woodman continued. "It was planned to wait and see if we could reach a little higher, but now the policy is changed. We're going to gather up what we can in one sack. That'll be merely hacking off a limb, but when it grows out on the other side of the tree we'll try to be there to hack again."

Wood looked at Stan. "Undoubtedly we'll have the man who killed your brother, tight in the sack with the rest, but I don't know how we're going to prove murder."

"What do you know of Jack Nissen?" Stan asked.

"Nissen is as much American as any of us. There's several more like him. We don't know whether they have been sucked in by money or ideology. There doesn't seem to be very much money involved."

"In this country men get off easier for treason than they do for murder, Mr. Woodman," Stan said.

"Sometimes, perhaps."

"The exceptions are rare. Let's prove the murder."

"That would please me," Woodman said. "How?"

"I assume you're ready now to start your—sacking procedure?"

Woodman glanced at the heavy flakes drifting past the window behind Linke. "With a slight delay," he said.

"Nissen will be picked up in any event, and Sven Herigstaad?" Stan asked.

"Yes."

"I can get a confession from Nissen. I don't think he knows who killed Bob, but I'm confident that I can get enough from him to trap both Herigstaad, who gave the order, and the actual murderer."

Woodman shook his head. "I can't allow you to question him after we arrest him. I'd like to, but I can't do that at all, Mr. Stan. You're a private attorney."

"I can question him as *his* lawyer, can't I?"

Woodman blinked. Accola and Clarke watched their boss. Accola was a former lawyer too. He smiled.

"If you can get him to accept you as his attorney," Woodman said. "Can you?"

JACK NISSEN'S eyes kept straying from Stan to the door of his cell. The thought of bars and steel doors must have been a long time in Nissen's mind, but now they were there before him.

"It's a trick!" he said. "Why should you defend me for nothing?"

"Not for money, Nissen, but not exactly for nothing either. When Herigstaad ordered you to stick tight to Bob and report every word he said, I don't think you knew the complete truth. Then Bob's plane was lost, and you've been wondering and worried ever since."

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Treason and murder."

"You can't scare me, Mr. Stan. I never went close to Bob's plane."

"You took money from Sven Herigstaad, a former Russian pilot. You told him what you knew about this plant here. Treason, Nissen."

The word was hammering in Nissen's brain. Stan said it again, "Treason." A word repeated over and over begins to lose its real sound, its real significance. It turns to terror. "Treason, Nissen."

"I don't need a lawyer. Get out!"

"If I leave, your last chance to get a sentence out of this somewhere in line with the damage you've done is gone. I'll defend you for selfish reasons, Nissen. I consider you as rotten as the politicians who sometimes rob this country. I'll do what I can for you—but only when I'm convinced you were in the affair only for money. If you truly believed you were serving a political philosophy, I want nothing to do with you. If you could laugh about treason—"

"It was money," Nissen said.

"How much?"

"Five hundred dollars to start. I didn't tell much. I didn't know much to tell. After I was in, he stalled about the money I was supposed to get each time I went to Ibex."

"Herigstaad?"

"Yes. Altogether, I never even got all of the first five hundred. I started cutting down on the information then, and lying, and giving dope that meant nothing to anybody. I wanted to get out then, but he kept saying the same as you, treason."

"That's what it was."

"I know! The thought was driving me nuts. I didn't have the guts to blow the whole deal open, and I was scared to death of being caught—and now I am."

"I won't minimize the seriousness of it," Stan said. "You were foolish. You sold out for money, and didn't get the money. Now you're in for a bad time. I can't promise you that what I'm going to suggest will make it a great deal easier, but we can try."

"Try what?"

"Herigstaad told you to listen to every word Bob said to anyone after the first day of the meet. Why?"

"I wasn't going to do it at first. Herigstaad got sore and threatened me. I almost made the break right there. I wish I had. Then he told me he had been a ferry pilot for the Russians during the war. Bob saw him in Alaska. He said the whole deal would explode if I didn't watch Bob—and I'd be right in the middle of it.

"He said all he wanted to know was who Bob talked to, and that nothing was going to happen to him if he forgot about thinking he'd recognized Herigstaad. Bob never mentioned it. I was pretty relieved—until I heard about his plane."

"Who killed Bob?"

"I don't know."

"Who was gone from that course the last day, someone who was then out of the meet, possibly someone from one of the other uranium teams?"

Nissen shook his head. "There were hundreds of skiers there. I don't. . . . Walters! By God, yes, Walters!"

"Who is he?"

"He's a cross-country man, a jumper too, from the testing plant at Gomez. He was out of the competition. I was with Bob at the top of the hill. I saw Walters take out on the ridges east sometime before noon."

"Was that unusual?"

"No. Lots of guys go out on those slopes to practice, but Walters didn't come back until sometime late in the afternoon."

"You saw him return?"

"No. A girl was asking about him. She was looking all over the course for him. I told her he was on top of the hill, the last I'd seen of him. She said he wasn't there. That night at the dance in the hotel she was with him, and she told me she'd met

him coming in off the ridges late that afternoon."

"Did Walters hear her say that?"

"Sure. The four of us were dancing close together."

"How did Walters react to her statement?"

"I never paid any attention."

"Do you know that Walters is one of Herigstaad's stooges, like yourself?"

Nissen winced. "No. Maybe he isn't. I'd begun to guess there were others, but I never knew who they were."

"Where did you generally pass your information to Herigstaad?"

"Sometimes in his room at the hotel. Sometimes we'd ski out on a slope, maybe behind some trees, and I'd give him what I'd written down."

Stan's disgust showed on his face. In sudden panic Nissen asked, "This isn't a trick, is it? You—"

"No trick. I'll defend you. I assume now that you think you're sorry for what you've done."

"I am sorry."

Mostly because he had been caught, Stan thought. "Have you tried to get in touch with Herigstaad since you found out Bob was missing?"

"He wouldn't take the calls."

"You're going to Ibex, Nissen. You're going to ask Herigstaad for money. You'll tell him you were sick of his bossing you around, with no pay, at the time of the Kuss. Bob mentioned to you that he thought he had recognized Herigstaad, but at the time he was too involved in the meet to do anything about it—but he wrote it down, complete notes on what he said to Herigsaad, and how Herigstaad reacted. He took the notes with him. You knew he wrote them because he said so, but you didn't see them."

"Herigstaad won't fall for that."

"He might. You didn't mention it to him at the time because you were angry about his not paying. You came back here. Bob disappeared. You figured things out, Nissen, and now you want money to keep quiet. Tell him you'll settle in part for some new ski equipment, an expensive group of items."

Nissen was miserable. "He already did give me two pairs of Gruenwalds and some shoes."

That was just about the average pay of traitors, Stan thought. "You make the story stick with Herigstaad and it might reduce your sentence, but I don't promise it will."

"He'll kill me, Mr. Stan! I've been afraid of him ever since I got tangled up with him."

"You'll be protected."

Nissen looked at the concrete floor for a long time. At last he said, "All right."

When Woodman heard Stan's proposal he sat down and thought for several moments. "Did he make a full confession?"

"That will come out at the trial?"

"You're being honest with that rat, aren't you?" Woodman stood up. "Let's try your idea, Stan."

THEY camped in dense timber on the east side of the saddle, Stan, Sheriff Linke, Accola and Clarke. Bunner had set them and their equipment down in a park two miles away. It would take an hour, Stan estimated, to climb to the rocks that flanked the saddle. He had looked from Bunner's plane at the snow field and it was smooth again, covered by the same storm that had been only wetness down in Gateway.

The radio tent was warmed with a tiny gasoline stove; the other tents by body heat. They made no wood fires outside for any purpose. Clarke and Accola took two-hour watches on the radio that linked the party with Ibex.

"We should have brought some reading matter," Linke said. Already he had almost memorized the printing on the boxes of dehydrated food.

On the third day they heard a plane come down at the park two miles away. It went up again soon afterward, and two hours later Woodman snowshoed into camp. "If anybody had ever told me I'd wind up here—" He reached for the coffee Linke held toward him.

"Is it working?" Accola asked.

Woodman drank some of the coffee. "My God, that Nissen was scared. He did a good job though. Herigstaad promised him the money." He took another swallow of coffee. "Nissen hanged himself that night in the jail at Benton Springs. I think

that cost us a pile of evidence, didn't it, Stan?"

Stan nodded.

"Herigstaad violated a primary rule of espionage—he called Walters on the phone at Gomez and asked him to come up for some skiing, but we'd already rigged it so Walters couldn't get away from work. Herigstaad asked him then where it was he had taken that real bad fall on the last day of the Kuss meet.

"Walters told him exactly where it was." Woodman pointed. "Right up there. He described everything very innocently, very completely. I think it's working."

Linke asked, "Why didn't you let Walters come?"

"Because Herigstaad would have sent him out here alone. Then we would have had one man for murder. If Herrigstaad comes, we've got two men."

"One accessory," Stan said, "after the fact, at least."

"And before the fact also," Woodman said. "When Herigstaad points at Walters, Walters will point right back."

Clarke called from the radio tent. "Ibex says Number One just left on the east ridges!"

The sky was clear. All weather reports said cold and clear for at least two days. Stan shook his head. "He's feinting to see if anyone in Ibex will trail him. He won't come all the way until before a storm is predicted."

"We can't take a chance on missing him," Woodman said.

They were halfway to the saddle when Clarke signaled them to return. The Ibex operator, who was in a fire tower a half mile from the sundeck, had reported Herigstaad now back at the top of the ski course.

For two days Herigstaad put their nerves on edge. He made four false starts, one by moonlight. Each time they tumbled out and started toward the saddle. "We got a regular trail halfway to the top!" Linke said. "Suppose he comes scouting in a plane one day?"

There was another serious problem too —when Stan and Bunner had taken Bob's body away, Stan had returned to the red plane the skis Bunner had used and the ski that had been a marker on the snow field.

"And now to my nephew, Eugene, I leave my bottle of Wildroot Cream-Oil, my hair's best friend!"
"Wildroot Cream-Oil relieves dryness so well, you only need a drink every fourteen days!"
WIFFO
DANDRUFF REMOVER ONLY $3!
"I'll bet 29¢ Wildroot Cream-Oil does it better!"
YOUR HAIR'S BEST FRIEND
America's Favorite Hair Tonic!
WILDROOT CREAM-OIL HAIR TONIC
NON-ALCOHOLIC
LANOLIN
GROOMS THE HAIR
RELIEVES DRYNESS
REMOVES LOOSE DANDRUFF
AS LITTLE AS 29¢
PLUS TAX

He had done so because the pilot said his cargo was awkward enough, without loose skis in the plane.

But the ski that Stan had left upright in the snow, not far from the firs on his way to Ibex, was still there. Herigstaad might come across it and recognize it and wonder why it was there. His suspicions might turn him back.

There was no chance now to go and get it, without leaving a give-away trail.

Number One in Ibex rubbed cinders across their nerve ends. He visited the two men in the fire tower. During the previous winter, for two weeks, there had been government weather observers in the tower, and now the special agents there sold Herigstaad a bill of goods.

Thereafter, he got his weather reports from them. The men camped under the saddle got the reports much sooner. Snow came on the sixth day, as predicted. They stood in it near the radio tent, ready to go. Accola kept querying Ibex.

"Number One is inside the sundeck, probably having a drink."

"Number One is talking to some women on the sundeck porch, out of the falling snow. How's it over there?"

"Number One has gone down the hill. He will now have a warm shower and a hot dinner, as usual."

Sheriff Linke cursed.

"Tell that comedian, Accola—who is it, Ives?"

"Yes."

"Tell him to restrain himself to the bare facts hereafter." Woodman smiled at Stan. They shook the snow from their coats and crawled into their tent. "Anyway, this snow may make your ski a little harder to see, Stan."

Linke groaned. "My wife had better never find out I can live for a week on goo that comes out of paper boxes."

Two days later, when the second section of a storm was due, Radio Fire Tower said Number One was leaving on the east ridges, with a pair of snowshoes strapped to his back.

"To dig with," Stan said. "He's coming all the way this time!"

Clarke was on the radio. The others sprawled up the steep pitch toward the saddle. Linke was carrying a hunting rifle with a telescopic sight. When they reached the rocks they strapped their snowshoes on their backs and climbed on hands and knees along the north shoulder of the saddle, and thus they came to a position where they could see the snow field and the tops of the firs that hid Bob's plane.

The field was smooth and glistening, and blowing snow had leveled off the hole Bunner and Stan had not filled.

HIS ski poles were rhythmic pistons. The white spray shot from the edges of his skis on turns. Up and down the lower crests that swept toward Ibex he came in powerful strides. It was Sven Herigstaad, German by birth, Norwegian by adoption, Russian by choice.

He skimmed between black rocks and small groups of firs, looking neither to right nor left, bent now on doing quickly what he had come to do. Stan was sure he did not see the ski, although Stan could not see it himself from where he lay.

Herigstaad looked at the clump of firs in passing, but he did not hesitate. He went up the snowfield, angling with certainty toward the toe of the mountain, and he stopped, Stan estimated, within a few feet of where Bob's plane had stopped.

With the vapor of his breath flattening back against a week's growth of red beard, Linke squinted through his rifle 'scope.

"He's in my county now, Woodman."

"We'll settle all that later."

Accola adjusted a camera with a telephoto lens attachment. He took pictures of Herigstaad, removing his skis to put on one web while he stood with the other foot on his skis; pictures of him probing the snow with a ski; pictures of him, apparently not satisfied, but digging with a snowshoe. Then Accola removed the telephoto lens and took more pictures.

"Get the scenery tied in solidly," Woodman said.

Accola nodded. "I've got everything."

"Let's go then."

They crept down to the saddle, still out of sight of Herigstaad, and there they put their webs on again. He saw them almost as soon as they came clear of the rock shoulder at the north end of the snow field. He was into his binders and his skis were throwing spume before they went forty yards farther.

"He's heading south," Linke said calmly. "He'll have to sprout wings to get clear that way."

Flight in any direction must have been Herigstaad's first thought, and then he apparently realized what Linke had said, for now Herigstaad turned. He used the tilt of the field to gain speed, swooping close to a five hundred foot fall.

He came back, toward Ibex, and now he was covering thirty feet to every five the men on snowshoes made in trying to head him off.

With a pistol in his hand, stumbling as he tried to run, Woodman called to Herigstaad to stop. The skier put his poles under one arm. At flashing speed he fired an automatic three times. One bullet crashed into the camera swinging from Accola's shoulder.

Accola and Woodman knelt, shooting. Linke was already on one knee. Unarmed, Stan rose to watch when he saw Herigstaad put his pistol away and start driving with both poles again. He was close, not more than fifty yards away, but he was almost a blur flying close to the snow.

Accola's and Woodman's bullets did not touch him.

Linke's rifle was a blast that rumbled afterward on Dinosaur. Herigstaad tumbled like a snowshoe rabbit caught in midleap, ploughing up a cloud of snow. Then he was still, with part of a broken ski standing at a slant near him.

He was struggling in soft snow to reach his pistol again when they hauled him out and laid him across his broken skis.

"Good Lord, Linke!" Woodman said. "Look at that leg. What kind of a mortar is that thing you're carrying?"

"Just a two-seventy. I had a steel-jacket behind that mushroom in case I had to make a body shot. He'll be all right, if he don't bleed to death."

Accola was examining his camera. "The film is still okay," he said, "but boy, would you look at that lens!"

IT WAS done now. Bob was buried. College of the West had been at the ceremony in the stadium. Herigstaad, with one leg amputated, was getting well. There would be lawyers to twist the significance of Herigstaad's handicap when he went on trial. They would mourn over him and call him the victim of a barbarous system.

All that was far removed from Stan now, and neither Linke nor Woodman had anything to do with it either.

There were nine defendants, seven for espionage, two for espionage and murder. The newspapers were having a spy-ring field day. Billie Nadon, quite photogenic, had been pictured a dozen times under the caption: *Ibex Beauty Who Helped Trap Red Spies.* The photographers had overlooked Mary Lou Callaghan and Janie Moss.

Stan was standing now at the window in the sheriff's office.

"When you going back?" Linke asked. "Not that I'm trying to rush you off, you understand."

"It may be a very long time, Enos. Until I know just what I'm good for, I'm going to get me a little apartment here, with a window that looks out on the mountains."

"I know just the place."

"I'll take it," Stan said. "I want to get settled before I begin flying lessons with Jack Bunner."

ONE MORE FIGHT

By

BARNABY CONRAD

"Fight this one last fight, Pacote," they said. "Pacote, you fool! Fight it without courage, without friends—and die while you still live!"

SHE sat inconspicuously in the airport cafe waiting for his plaffe. She saw the American representatives of the A.P. and U.P. arrive, along with the hordes of Spanish newsmen and photographers, disrupting the usual calm routine of the Madrid airport. Nearby she heard the talk, lifting above the growing sound.

"They say he might retire," one baggage porter was saying, a little man with a Chaplin mustache.

"Ha," snorted his colleague. "They'll never let him. Flores will never let him." He smiled knowingly and rubbed his thumb and forefinger together under the other's nose. "Not while he still gets twice the *pesetas* that any other sword gets, they won't let him go. They'll kill him first."

He flung himself straight over the lowered horns as the bull leapt forward. . . .

"I for one hope they don't let him quit; he's had me bawling with emotion on too many afternoons. I hope he goes on forever."

The other cast a cynical eye over the waiting crowd. "The Stork's return is even better than his departure. But if he'd had a bad season in the Americas there would be no one here at all to meet him."

He was not quite right, for Tonita would have been there under any circumstances. Even if he'd been sent back in a lead coffin as she so often dreamed he might. She knew he was risking that every day he fought because of the accounts the Mexican and South American papers wired back. She didn't stop to think how many of them were faked up, even though she knew how

newspapers were. Didn't they always refer to her in connection with Pacote as "Antonia Sino, the actress?" She was not "the" actress or even "an" actress. She was 27, and she'd done nothing in her life but wait in the shadows—as she was doing now—for Pacote Rodriquez, often called The Stork, because of his build, or The Best, because he was king of the world's bullfighters.

This would be the last time she'd ever wait like this. He'd said that in his letters for the past six months. Maybe he meant it this time. She'd make her mind up definitely. She could no longer stand the endless dreaded Sundays and holidays praying in a hotel room, wondering whether today he'd be carried out on the shoulders of the crowd or just carried out. She'd found herself wishing that he would get hurt so he couldn't fight any more, and felt guilty for wishing it. It was everything to him. Could he give it up?

She would soon know, for the sound of an incoming plane made the newspapermen gulp down their coffee and the photographers gather up their camera equipment. Tonita stayed where she was while the others hurried outside.

The plane came to earth and its motors stopped gratefully in front of the main building. The steps were wheeled up to it and the door opened. First came several unknown people. Flores appeared, fat little owl-like Flores with the omnipresent pencil-thin cigar and dark glasses, and a murmur went over the crowd. Then came the familiar gaunt figure, dressed in a conservative dark suit, and a shout went up from the watchers.

HE STOOD blinking down at them in the sun like some Caesar, angular but majestic, sad-eyed, big-nosed, scarred, ugly, but good-looking in a strange way. He was pale and even thinner than before, and in ten months the gray streak down the middle of his ebony hair had gone almost white. His face was lined and weary. At twenty-nine he looked forty.

As he walked down the steps the reporters crowded around him. "Maestro, what was your impression of Mexico?" "What was your best fight there?" "How do the South American bulls compare with the Spanish?"

He answered them briefly in his low sad Andaluz accent.

One American reporter called in English. "Hey, Pacote, how'd ya like New York?"

The bullfighter gave one of his rare grins, and it came to his thin face slowly and with difficulty, as though he were wearing a mud pack that he didn't want to crack. He said in English: "I like Stor' Club ver' much."

They laughed. "And how about *las señoritas Americanos?*"

Pacote colored slightly. "Fine." He had never been a ladies' man. "They looked fine, but I didn't meet so many."

"Is it true you made two million dollars last year?" asked the American in Spanish.

Pacote's mouth widened a bit. "That sounds a little exaggerated. Besides I don't know how many pesetes or pesos make a dollar. Talk to Flores."

"I understand you're fighting in La Corrida de la Prensa on Thursday," said the reporter, Cameno.

"You understand wrong then," came back Pacote, quietly, but with a sudden hint of anger.

"Not fighting in La Prensa!"

"No," said Pacote, with a glance at his manager Flores who stood hard-faced at his side. "I'm quitting."

"We've heard that before."

"No, this is it," said Pacote, and the intensity in his voice told them he meant it. "I want to quit while I still get cheered, not booed. I'm going to quit while I'm still whole."

No point in telling them that his nerve was going back on him, that he was exhausted, that his timing was off, that he'd been drinking too much. It was time to quit, that was all. He let his gaze run over the people Where was she? She said she'd meet him.

"But what will you do, maestro?"

"I have a ranch in Cordoba," said Pacote starting to move through the crowd toward the main building. "I'm going to enjoy it for a while, do some riding and shooting; then maybe raise *toros bravos* for the others to kill themselves with."

He wouldn't say anything about Tonita yet. They'd announce it together when

everything was arranged. Maybe she was in the waiting room.

Cameno turned to Flores who was waddling along beside Pacote. "What do you think of this momentous decision, Don Jose?"

Flores shrugged his shoulders exasperatedly. "Paco knows what he is doing." But it was clear from the way he chewed his cigar that he didn't think so.

"This will please Tano Ruiz greatly," said Cameno, and as he had calculated, Pacote stopped walking and turned to him.

"Yes?"

"He has been saying—well, excuse me, maestro, for we don't believe it—but he has said publicly that you are afraid to fight in the same ring with him."

Pacote's eyes flared and then narrowed. "I have fought in the same ring with him."

"But that was a year ago. Now he is twenty. He has learned a good deal, and in your absence he has become number one in all of Spain."

Flores' eyes were encouraging the newspapermen to keep talking, for he saw the look on Pacote's face.

"So that young *jantoche* is calling Pacote a coward?"

"That's what he said when we heard rumors that Pacote might retire. He said that Pacote's nerve was gone, that he was through."

Pacote felt his heart pound. Then he smiled. He had to smile; there would always be a Tano Ruiz around. He'd better get used to it.

He forced himself to say: "Maybe he's right." He got a peculiar painful relief from hearing himself say the truth instead of trying to swallow it.

He walked into the building with the reporters trailing like the children of Hamlein. Tonita was standing there in the doorway to the restaurant. He couldn't see her well because of the bright sun he had come from. He went up to her and took her hands and he could see that her good face looked older and tired, too.

"Hola," he said. He didn't kiss her because of the people around. He said, "Excuse me a moment," to the reporters and led her around the corner to a deserted passageway. They looked at each other silently for a moment.

"Your—your hair is changed," he said. It was pulled back in a bun with two braided muffins over her ears.

"Yours, too," she said with a sad smile, her eyes going up to the whitened streak.

"I'm through, *guapa*," he said hoarsely. "I've just told them."

She gave a little laugh to keep the tears back.

"Shall I tell them something else?" he asked hesitantly, and he was not now the great Monster of the Rings, the suicidal revolutionary who had written bullfighting history in his short life, but just an awkward Cordoban peasant who was not very sure of himself.

"Yes," she said, and he kissed her clumsily and she clung to him. He took out of his pocket a large ugly ring which had cost a lot of *pesos* and which they told him in the Mexican store was beautiful.

"*Que lindo!*" she exclaimed as he put it on her finger. They kissed again and went back to the newspapermen.

"*Chicos,* I have some more news for you. It's that very soon—Señorita Sino and I—" he bogged down for a moment.

"*Olé!*" shouted Cameno, and the others congratulated them. Only fat little Flores was silent, and one could not tell what was going on behind those dark glasses.

"When the world's greatest bullfighter announces his engagement," said Cameno, "there must be champagne. I invite you all to Chicote's now!"

AT CHICOTE'S, favorite cafe of the pigtailed folk and theater people, the owner himself donated the champagne for the honor of having the Stork in his emporium again, after his foreign campaigns in which, Chicote said in a gaudy toast, Pacote had spread the glory of Spain in Latin America anew. There were many toasts to Tonita also and much campagne consumed.

Drinking too much, Pacote said to himself as the party went on way past noon. *Been drinking too much for a year.* Didn't Flores keep telling him so? It was easy for his manager to tell him what to do and what not to do. He wasn't the one who had to keep going day after day, knowing he was slipping, risking his neck for a screaming mob, his nerves jagged, with never a break so that his stomach muscles could untwist. But now he could relax. He could drink

as much as he wanted without worrying whether a hangover would cost him his life. He was through.

He would start a normal life with Tonita in spite of Flores and Tano Ruiz and Cameno and the rest of them who wanted him to fight until he was sixty. To hell with Flores. All that mattered was Tonita. *Madre de Dios,* but she was sweet and fine. It was good to be sitting next to her and smell the sweetness of her and to be able to lean down and whisper in her ear.

Pacote heard a stir behind him. "It's Tano Ruiz," said someone. The atmosphere in the small cafe changed immediately.

He turned around slowly and saw Tano Ruiz and his two brothers coming in. Pacote nodded to Tano—he had nothing against the kid, really. Tano stared back coldly, and sat down at a nearby table. He was tall and good looking in a slightly effeminate way. He had a pimply rash on his neck and his brown hair looked marceled, but still women turned to look at him when he walked down the street. He was twenty, but his self-confidence and his two years as a top senior matador made him look older.

He's right where I was eight years ago, thought Pacote. *He's itching for me to fight with him*—mano a mano, *a personal, hand-to-hand contest—in the biggest fight of the year, La Prensa. He's on the make. He's putting out everything, risking everything in every fight, the way I did at his age. He wants to be The Best. He's hoping I'll take a last fight and have a bad afternoon and he'll have a good afternoon with his looks and his youth and with his craving to be Number One conquering his fear and making him do things he'd never do again so that. . . .*

"Paco, what they would pay for a *mano a mano* between you two, just one last one."

It was as though Flores had read his mind. Pacote didn't bother to answer. They'd been through it too many times. He poured himself another glass of champagne and drank it. Suddenly he heard Tano Ruiz addressing him in that mock-polite tone.

"Maestro," he was saying, and the way he said that word was an insult in itself. "I am contracted for the Prensa on Thursday. So far the card isn't complete. I propose we make it a *mano a mano*—to sort of clear up matters."

Pacote gripped the seat of his chair, but he didn't answer.

"I propose we have it out," Tano had risen halfway out of his chair and was almost shouting, "and with Miuras!"

This was because there was a rumor, and not completely unfounded, that Pacote was afraid of Miuras, the famous bulls of death. They had killed more bullfighters than any other breed.

They had killed Pacote's father.

Pacote said nothing. He felt Tonita stiffening next to him. He flicked a glass with his fingernail. *Get a grip on yourself,* his brain was telling him. *You're a little tight. Don't let yourself be goaded into anything. . . .*

There would always be a last fight, but never a real last fight until the one that found him torn and red on the sand. Then there would be posthumous decorations from the government, and poems written and dirges sung and wax statues made to travel in carnival exhibits, and glowing romanticized biographies published, and immortality.

But it would be cold and black and he didn't want the nothingness of immortality. He wanted Tonita and the sun of the ranch and life.

Flores leaned over and wheezed, "We could ask two hundred thousand pesetas and get it easily. One last fat purse. You could take the afternoon easy, coast all the way through it."

Coast! Maybe in Lima or Mexico he could take it easy, fight feet away from the horns instead of inches, but not in Madrid where he was Number One, not in La Prensa, and not with this young pup Tano Ruiz.

No, it would mean sweating blood. Maybe shedding it, too. It was easier to back down and quit the game with his reputation semi-intact. He sat back in his chair. He took a cigarette out of a silver case studded with bull ranch brands and tapped it intently on the back of his hand. He turned to Ruiz and said quietly: "I'm sorry. I'm retired."

Apparently it was what they were waiting for, because the brothers sprang up. "I say in front of everyone here," announced one, "that you are retiring because you are afraid to meet Tano in the same ring because he has shown you to be a coward."

Pacote jumped to his feet with a cry. It was the champagne—he did not stop to think they were provoking him to get the lucrative fight. All he knew was he was being called yellow in front of the girl he loved and a room full of people and that he was a better and more honest matador than this young faker would ever be.

"All right, La Prensa, then, and with Miuras, but I swear to you this is my last!"

The reporters ran for the nearest telephone, and Tano Ruiz and his brothers walked out of the cafe smiling.

"You fool!" Tonita cried. "Well, fight your last fight then. Fight this last fight and the next last fight and the next one, but without me. I hope Tano makes a fool of you in the ring the way he has here and that the Miuras see to it that it's your last fight forever!" She pulled off the big ring, threw it on the table and walked out.

"Tonita!" Pacote started to follow her, but Flores grabbed his arm.

"Let her go! She'll be around after the fight—as soon as you retire. Here, have a glass of champagne. I'm going over to take care of the contract."

Pacote sagged down in his seat and sobbed drunkenly.

THURSDAY came, though Pacote never thought it would. He awoke in the hotel room with the familiar sickening, yet exhilarating knowledge of: Today we fight! But this was not like the fights of the past year. Today was *algo de miedo*—something fearful, more important than all the others put together. The last one.

He telephoned Tonita, but the concierge at her hotel said she'd "gone to pray." He was glad she wasn't there, for there was nothing to say to her until after the fight. As he lay there in the darkened room he tried to make himself think of other things—of the fun he and Tonita had had in Malaga two years ago, how it would be on the ranch, whether she would come back to him—but always the red and yellow of the plaza and the black shape of a bull would superimpose itself on top of whatever other image he tried to put in his brain.

It's true, he thought. *My nerves are gone. . . .*

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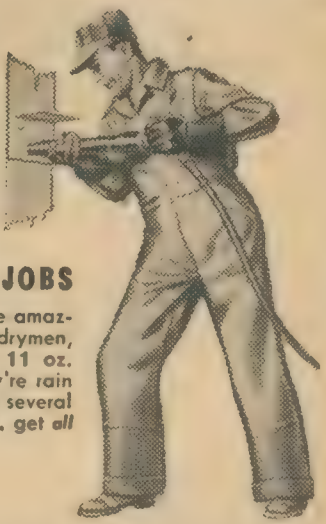

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By the time Flores arrived, a little before noon, the sheets of the bed were moist with sweat, and Pacote still hadn't made up his mind whether he would coast or risk his life to give the public that had made him rich and famous one last great afternoon. Let it depend on the cattle, he thought, putting off the decision.

He got up and started to put on a gray flannel suit. "Where you going?" Flores grunted.

"I'm going to the *sorteo.*" he answered. "I'm drawing my own."

"You ought to stay and rest. No point in getting excited today. We've got the money. You can coast."

But Pacote was dressed, and they went out. In the lobby they met Chico, the old *banderillero* who had been with him eight years.

"I'm drawing today, Chico."

"For luck," the peon said with a smile.

"For luck. And to see them."

They knew he was too nervous about this fight just to be told about the bulls he'd draw—he had to know, for better or worse, what he was going to meet in the ring four hours hence.

They took a cab and arrived at the big ring in twenty minutes. There were a lot of people in back around the corrals to watch the drawing. When they saw Pacote, several of them let out a cheer. This was an added treat; the matador rarely does his own drawing.

A man shouted: "Pacote, today we will see who is *El Maestro*—give that braggart the bath!"

One man, who happened to be the little porter from the airport, called: "Maestro, I am betting two months' salary that you will show up this faker!"

Pacote climbed the steps to the top of the stone corrals. There they were, down below him—the six big Miuras, three of which he would have to kill. Tano Ruiz's *banderillero* was already there talking to *ganadero.*

The breeder, after greeting Pacote courteously said: "This one is the bad one—that cathedral over there." He pointed to the black bull that was apart from the others. "It is called *matajaca*—horse-killer."

It kept looking up at the people, shaking its head, and pawing. It was all black except for where the big jagged 110 was branded on its side. It was big, but it wasn't that alone that made Pacote suck in his breath and pray that he wouldn't draw it. It was those horns and the funny tilt it had to its head and the strange look in one eye that made him feel sure it would chop to the right. That is the most dreaded thing in bullfighting, for a man must go over the right horn to get the sword in between the shoulder blades.

"Some might call that a comfortable head," said Tano Ruiz's *banderillero.* The horns, smallish but sharp as ice picks, were curved so drastically towards each other than the points almost met. "The chances of its catching you are less than if it was like this." He indicated a wide open spread of horns with his thumb and forefinger. "But I say that if it ever does get you, you'll never get off them. Like a corkscrew going in. I hope we don't draw it."

They grouped the numbers of the bulls' brands on the back of an envelope, putting the two smallest and most comfortably horned ones—the nuns—with the dreaded 110. Then they wrote the two groups of three on two pieces of cigarette paper. These they rolled up and dropped into the *ganadero's* broad-brimmed sombrero. Pacote offered the hat to Tano's man. He drew and unfolded the little paper. Pacote could tell by the expression on his face what he had drawn.

"Let's go," he said to Flores and Chico.

As they pushed through the crowd to the cab, Pacote saw the little porter smiling at him confidently as though saying: *You and I know what a wonderful performance Madrid will see today.*

On the way back to town Pacote was silent, but just before they got to the hotel he said, "I'm going to coast today. Take them wide and safe. Let's get through this last one alive."

MADRID'S great Plaza de Toros was jammed, and there was an excitement in the air that hadn't existed since the old days of Belmonte and Joselito. It was a good warm afternoon and the stands were a mass of color, mantillas, and even a few sombreros Cordobeses. Everyone wanted and expected a great bullfight today. Most

people thought that this young Tano Ruiz would show the old maestro up.

The first bull took a lot of spirit out of the crowd, however. It was a perfect little animal and very easy to work with, but Pacote did nothing with it. He looked incredibly graceful in the brocaded gold and green costume as he would walk out to the bull with the scarlet cape in front of him. But when the bull charged he would step back and make the horns go by him several feet away instead of inches. He was controlling the bull so well, however, that the public could not boo. But neither did they clap after Pacote went in to kill— from a safe distance—and dropped the bull with a half a sword thrust.

As he walked up the fence cleaning the blood sword on the *muleta,* he said to Flores: "Well, that's one away."

He wiped his sweaty face on a towel and looked up at the crowd with his sad eyes. He wished he didn't feel so guilty. But it was better to feel a little guilty than to get killed just to give them their money's worth. He was glad Tonita wasn't up there. He saw the porter in the sunny, unfashionable section of the stands. The little man waved and smiled down encouragingly as though to say: *We all know what a difficult beast that was and that you will do wonders with your next.* Pacote turned away.

The trumpet blew and Tano Ruiz's bull skidded into the ring. Tano, handsome and well built, stalked arrogantly out to meet it. He called the bull: "Ahaaa, *toro!*" When it charged at the irritating voice, he planted his feet and swung the cape so near his body that the horn knifed by his knee almost twice as close as Pacote had done. The crowd roared and shouted *"Ole"!* Again and again he made the bull follow the cape closer and closer and the *oles* becaming deafening.

As Tano "fixed" the animal with a swirling *rebolera* pass and walked away from it, someone shouted: "Look and learn, Pacote!"

They know I can do better than that any time I want to, Pacote said to himself after the picadors had gone and Tano was out there with the sword and muleta in the roar of the crowd. *They should know I could show him up easily, if it weren't my last fight.*

After killing fairly well, Tano was so applauded that the *presidente* of the ring waved his handkerchief once, which meant he was granted one ear of the dead bull in token of a good performance. Tano started to take a lap around the ring to receive the applause, but Pacote's second bull was let into the arena.

"Now we'll see something," said the little porter nudging his friend. "He is too great a bullfighter and has too much pride to let that young puppy be better. You might as well pay me my money now!"

But Pacote was the same as on his first bull. And contrasted with Tano's smooth, brave performance he looked even worse. The boos started and rose in crescendo and were climaxed when, instead of killing by going straight at the bull and giving it a fair shot at him, Pacote ran off safely to the side and stabbed it in the lungs. It took two more swords to finish the animal and the crowd was wild.

Pacote dared to glance up at the crowd only when he was back behind the fence and Tano was out with his second bull. He saw Morales, the big bull critic, sitting in the first row scribbling notes and he could imagine what was being written. He saw the porter paying off the bet to his friend, and he thought, *That's not fair— I still have another bull.* But he knew that his next was number 110, the horse-killer, and that he would be even worse than on the other two.

Tano was bringing the house down. It seemed he could do nothing wrong today. Every fancy pass, even the dangerous one done kneeling, turned out perfectly, the bull's horns skimming close by his body each time. And then with the *muleta,* the heart-shaped rag that is draped over the sword in the last part of the fight, he was even better. At one time he had the bull so dominated that he leaned forward between the horns and gave a fleeting kiss to the bewildered animal's forehead. The crowd loved it, and the bullfighter turned to them and held up his forefinger, saying, *"Yo, el unico*—the only one who can do these things."

"Hah!" said Flores. "You've forgotten more about bull-fighting than he'll ever learn. He should be taught a lesson."

"Yes," said Pacote, "but I'm not going to be the one to do it."

Tano went on to kill well, and the crowd insisted he be given both ears of the bull.

Flores was looking up at the crowd as Tano, smiling that smug smile, ran around the ring while spectators threw coats, wine-skins, cigars and money down to him.

"Isn't that Tonita up there?"

Pacote looked up, saw that it was, and quickly looked away. His first thought was, *You should put up a good fight for her, so that she will be proud,* and then his second thought tumbled on top of it: *Don't be crazy—you were forced into this fight—but don't let yourself get forced into getting killed, and there's the trumpet—get your cape ready because the toril gate's swinging open and here he comes, the last bull of your life. . . .*

The spectators gasped as 110 swooshed out of the dark tunnel into the brightness of the sun. The corral dust blew off the huge withers as he raced across the empty ring. He slowed down to hook one of those curved horns into the top slats of the red fence and with a shake of his head, sent them flying into the air.

Chico started to go out to give him the preliminary passes, but Pacote said in an almost weary tone, "Leave him."

He got the cape right in his hands and stepped out. *"Toroooo—huh—huh!"*

The bull swung around and charged. When it got near him, Pacote stepped well back from the horns. Two more passes like it and the boos and insults began. But on the fourth pass the bull unexpectedly hooked to the right, and the blunt curve of the horn slammed into the man's stomach knocking him back sprawling. He got to his knees slowly and stayed there holding the pain of the blow. There was no chance of the bull's charging back, for Chico had jumped in the ring and with a flashing cape had lured the bull away out into the center of the arena.

PACOTE stayed there on his knees, hugging his stomach and feeling dizzy. It all came on his dazed mind at once—a jumble of Tonita, the little porter betting his salary, the grinning face of Tano Ruiz, the critics' opening paragraphs in tomorrow's papers. Suddenly nothing mattered but this fight, this bull. He had to show them all why he was called The Best, why he was the highest paid bullfighter who ever lived.

Two banderilleros ran out and tried to lift him off his knees, thinking he was hurt. But he cursed them and shook them off and ordered them from the ring. He reached over and took his cape and started out toward the center of the ring. Even on his knees he was graceful.

"Toro—ahaaaa!" he yelled, and the bull turned away from Chico to watch this thing coming at him. *"Toro, toro!"*

The bull's tail went up and it charged from thirty feet away, gaining tremendous speed as it ran. Pacote waited motionless, holding the cape partly in front of himself as the giant animal bore down on him. Before the horns reached the scarlet cloth. Pacote's arms swung slowly, rhythmically, making the alluring cape change the bull's course just enough so that the left horn missed his chest by two inches instead of plowing through his lungs. He passed the bull like that, without swaying back or changing his position, six times. He should have been killed six times, but when he finally got off his knees he showed only a ripped sleeve.

The crowd was frenzied with the artistry and bravery they were witnessing, and the applause had never sounded so sweet to Pacote. God, this is what he was born to do, what he loved to do, what no one could do better! And when the time came to dedicate the bull, he did not dedicate it to Tonita nor Flores nor a bull critic nor to the man who raised the bulls. He stood in the middle of the ring with the kinky montera-hat in his hand and pivoted slowly to include the great public of Madrid for whom he had risked his life so many times. He wanted to please them more now than the first day he had fought in this ring eight years ago.

He dropped the hat and went down on his knees. He had the red *muleta* spread wide by the wooden sword now, and he shook it and grunted to attract the bull that was forty feet away. The first pass was the motionless statuesque Pass of Death—only kneeling. Not even Pacote's heavy-lidded eyes changed as the bull hurtled by.

He followed it with a series of natural passes, the one where the sword does not spread the cloth and the bull must choose between the inviting bulk of the man and the small limp rag. Standing, it is the most dangerous pass of all; kneeling it is

suicide. The first charge made him sway back, for if he hadn't the horn would have spiked his neck. But two more charges and his magic wrist so completely dominated the bull's movements that it seemed as though it were on rails and could not deviate. Even the dangerous right hook began to get corrected under the punishing passes.

At the climax, as the bull stared glassy-eyed and bewildered by this insignificant kneeling figure that had mastered it with only a red rag, Pacote leaned forward and rested his elbow on its forehead. If the bull decided to charge he couldn't miss.

He looked up into the roar of the crowd, and for the first time in his life he smiled in a bull ring.

He held up a forefinger, making fun at Tano Ruiz and himself at the same time, and said: "I—the only one who can do these things!"

The crowd was hoarse and it was time to kill. He got to his feet and walked to the fence.

As he substituted the wooden sword for the heavy steel one, Flores said, "Don't go in straight, he's still got that hook. In the lungs, man!"

Pacote shook his head, muttering: "I've got to end this one right."

"No!" Flores shouted, but Pacote was back with the bull, lining it up with its feet together so that the shoulder blades were open. Then profiling himself, he furled the muleta with his left hand, focused the bull's attention on it, sighted down the blade, and flung himself straight over the lowered horns as the bull leapt forward. The two were one as the sword went in to the hilt, and then Pacote was high on the right horn. He was flung to the other horn and felt it screw deep into the flesh of his upper leg. The crowd was screaming and men were spilling into the ring to distract the animal, but the bullfighter was caught on the horn like a rag doll on a fishhook. Then the bull dropped.

They got the unconscious man off the horn, and his banderilleros boosted him over the fence and rushed him down the dark passageway to the ring infirmary. They put him on the white metal operating table. The doctor worked on him, and when he could talk Pacote gasped: "The bull—dead?"

"*Si, maestro, si,*" Chico assured him.

"They gave you both ears, tail and a hoof," said Flores. "They'll never forget this fight as long as they live."

Pacote sagged down into unconsciousness again, and the doctor bent over him. Tonita arrived at the door of the infirmary in time to hear the doctor say to his assistant: "We won't be operating—this man has gone already."

Tonita put her head on Flores' chest, and she was laughing and sobbing. "One more fight," she moaned. "Just one more fight."

I told my beautiful wife: "All right, I'll get you your divorce, but I'm not doing it for you, or for your racket boy-friend. I'm doing it for me, so thanks for letting me get off the bus."

Exit lines. Big stuff. Bigger lies. I walked out wishing I were dead. And that wish was almost to come true too soon.

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25¢ **DETECTIVE STORY** MAGAZINE

RAP ON WOOD

By
CHARLES ELLSWORTH

You must be aware that there is a serious penny shortage. Blame, if you wish, inflation, taxes—or believe the government press releases—but here's the inside story. It might be love—and then again it might be Finnegan!

MY FRIEND McQuoit, who usually is to be found in the bar at the National Press Club, is the last man in Washington whom I would expect to quote on the current penny shortage. McQuoit is no financial expert, certainly, and to the best of my knowledge has not so much as a piggy bank of his own. Indeed, he seems to have no tangible resources whatever except his uncanny instinct for the news *behind* the news, an Irish feeling for r o m a n c e, and a wide acquaintanceship among lobbyists and public relations men who, thanks to sturdy expense accounts, can

Dazedly Mr. Blinz laid another slice of smoked salmon on the plate and slid it behind the counter. . . .

almost always afford to pay for his drinks.

In these days, however, a newspaperman can make a reputation as a reliable source with far less. Therefore I believe McQuoit implicitly when he states, as he stated in the club bar today, that the entire blame for the penny shortage must rest on a little man named Leonid Blinz, a displaced person now living in Akron, Ohio. There's a woman at the bottom of it, of course; a native born redhead of good family referred to only, in McQuoit's testimony, as Miss Gottschalk. Under the circumstances in which these two people found themselves, his version of the penny shortage must seem perfectly credible to anyone but an economist or a bureaucrat.

You didn't know there was a penny shortage? Well, there is, and a very serious one at that. Businessmen are yelling their heads off all over the country. They may believe, if they wish, the press releases put out by the government to explain away the situation—defense demands for copper; sales tax requirements at the state level, and so on. Such vague generalities may be all well and good, but the inside story as revealed by McQuoit is a very different one. As he says, these artificial shortages usually involve basic human emotions, such as fear, greed, ambition or self-interest. Then, too, (as McQuoit is careful to point out) there's always love.

For example, it was not that Mr. Blinz deliberately set out to create a penny shortage. Not to begin with, at least. It was merely that he wanted two things more than anything else in the world. The first was a modern store front for his newly acquired dry-cleaning and pressing shop on Main Street. The second was any small sign of approval—a smile, a kind word, or even a friendly nod—from Miss Gottschalk at the Branch Library.

Viewed through the steamy window of his shop on the day the shortage began, Akron's Main Street had a strong emotional appeal for Mr. Blinz. To a man whose last known business address had been a dugout in a heap of rubble that faced a cobblestone lane no wider than the blade of the bulldozer that had cleared it, Main Street revealed itself as a remarkably broad and handsome boulevard. A plump, bouncing, middle-aged little man with an excitable fringe of hair, Mr. Blinz was a booster at heart and only looked forward to the time when his modest establishment should be worthy of so magnificent a setting.

The sagging, one-storied building in which he had rented space turned a forbidding face to customers. The wooden frames of its display windows were badly rotted, its overhead sign was a danger to the passerby, and such paint as still remained was the color of soft coal smoke. The door frame was stout, but the door itself was so warped that trade could scarcely find its way inside if it wanted to. Mr. Blinz, whose feelings about the care of property were all the stronger for having, as yet, none of his own, felt that the owner should do something.

Nor was he discouraged by the warnings of Mr. Updegraff, who ran the newsstand next door from behind a barricade of art magazines and racing forms. Mr. Updegraff had snorted loudly at the idea of his ever getting anything fixed. The landlord, he gloomed, would never spend so much as one thin dime on the rickety rattrap he had stuck Mr. Blinz with. Look at the location! It had no future, he complained bitterly. The bus station had moved from across the street, the building was several blocks from the high rent section, and there was simply no hope of doing a real business in such a blighted area.

Mr. Blinz, from first hand knowledge of several areas back home that had survived being blighted thoroughly, scientifically, on purpose, and by experts, was puzzled by this attitude. He deferred to Mr. Updegraff's opinion, for the landlord was admittedly difficult, but he himself remained hopeful. Was not America one big future for everyone, even in its tiniest part?

ALSO, he believed in Miss Gottschalk of the Public Library system who, though cold and moody, was required by her profession to be helpful to people who were trying to improve themselves. To his European eye Miss Gottschalk was the very embodiment of efficient, capable, not-so-young American womanhood. She was tall, which Mr. Blinz was not, and almost slender, which distinctly he was not, and she wore glasses with plastic rims which were cleverly designed and colored to go with her red hair. In addition she had a dominant, not to say bossy, personality—she was impatient with Mr. Blinz when he made

small mistakes in grammar or pronunciation, and she corrected him sharply and often, for which he was grateful.

Beyond that his personal contacts with Miss Gottschalk did not go. They were friends in a business way, with Mr. Blinz cleaning and pressing her suits and Miss Gottschalk selecting books for him to read, but he was having no luck in love. Miss Gottschalk displayed a great contempt for most things male. To all men who were older than choir boys she flung books across the lending desk as though they were reproaches, and sometimes she withered Mr. Blinz with furious looks that spoiled his supper, which he prepared for himself in a little curtained room at the back of his shop. In short, Miss Gottschalk was a cantankerous, fiercely independent spinster who needed exactly what Mr. Blinz had to offer—affection, admiration, and rapt attention—but who had not a hope in the world of getting them.

Mr. Blinz could not understand why this should be so, but, as in the matter of a new store front, he did not despair. He plotted constantly to please Miss Gottschalk in small ways, and that was why his place of business was the only one open along the whole length of Main Street at that early hour. When Miss Gottschalk passed in the new car which she had bought for herself, and which she drove so competently, he meant to hail her. If she stopped, he would tell her that her fine, aqua-colored tweed suit was ready to wear to that afternoon's meeting of the Library Board. Thus he might be able to spare her an extra errand during her lunch hour, and perhaps lighten her day.

Not a very sinister beginning, you say, for what at least one member of the Federal Reserve Board later characterized as a plot against American business? McQuoit agrees, but fortunately the official was not interviewed before all the facts were in. If it hadn't been for a certain city editor. . . . But let's get on with McQuoit's exposé.

Miss Gottschalk turned the corner into Main Street right on schedule that morning, and at sight of Mr. Blinz flailing his arms at her from the door of his shop, blew her horn twice in recognition of his signal. She even allowed herself to smile before she slowed down, backed and parked smoothly alongside the opposite curb. The sun shone a little brighter for Mr. Blinz as she crossed the street with her long American stride, and sparks of reflected light from windows and windshields seemed to rain down around her as she moved. At close range he saw that she was bearing down upon him with an expression which, while purposeful, was not unpleasant. She was wearing the green sharkskin that made a beacon of her hair, he noted with dizzy approval, though her hat almost smothered what could still be seen of her tresses after she had finished yanking them into a bun on the back of her neck. Mr. Blinz sighed gustily for the beauty thus lost to the world, and forced wide the door behind him.

"My suit is ready," Miss Gottschalk said, making the words into a clearly enunciated statement of fact rather than a question. She glanced at her strap watch. "Good. You have a dressing room, of course? Then I shall change at once and leave the one I am wearing to be sponged and pressed."

"V'y not?" beamed Mr. Blinz, leading the way to the back of the shop and throwing aside the curtain. He was glad he had done the breakfast dishes and made up his cot. The furnishings were primitive, but his bookshelves left little room for anything else.

"*Why* not," Miss Gottschalk corrected from habit. After a brief inspection of the cubicle, she shut herself into it without further comment and Mr. Blinz withdrew once more to the front of the shop. How talk to such a woman? he asked himself mournfully. Clearly he lacked the pep, the drive, the outward symbols of real American hustle with which to impress her. Maybe, when he got a new store front, she would see that he had the makings of a real go-getter, a coming man in the community. When he got his new store front. . . .

At this moment a magnificent car drew up to the curb before Mr. Blinz, to whom all American cars were magnificent. From this car his landlord, a large man by the name of Appelstruther, removed himself with difficulty.

"Blinz!" he rumbled. "You let out the waistband on them pants yet? I got to have 'em right away."

"Tomorrow I promised them yet," stammered Mr. Blinz, "but come in once. I press them now already."

The truth was that, confronted by Mr. Appelstruther in person, poor Mr. Blinz was inclined to flinch—his landlord re-

minded him most unpleasantly of a certain *Gauleiter* who had once made him very uncomfortable. On this occasion, however, he remembered that he was on the way toward becoming an American citizen himself, and also that Miss Gottschalk was within earshot. Therefore he tramped hard on the pedal of his pressing machine, which emitted a fine robust roar to lend substance to his words, and said, "So now you are here, again I am asking—why not put up a new store front? You could take pride, then, you are owning a nice looking piece property on Main Street. Is good business, no?"

"No!" Appelstruther replied with undue force. "I ain't never spent any money on this place, and I ain't aiming to. Not with rent controls the way they are, I ain't. Of course, if you want to slip me a little bonus money on the side—"

"No," said Mr. Blinz. "That is against the law."

Mr. Appelstruther got red in the face and snatched his neatly creased trousers from the very maw of the pressing machine. "All right then," he snapped, throwing the garment over his arm. "Rent her the way she is or get out. And for two cents I'd—"

Mr. Blinz rapped superstitiously on his wooden counter, partly to ward off whatever it was that Mr. Appelstruther would like to do to him, and partly to drive off the dread thought that he might have to find another business location.

Two pennies fell to the floor.

Mr. Appelstruther glanced sharply at Mr. Blinz, who had turned quite pale. Since he was sure the little tailor would never have dared to make fun of him, however, he assumed that the coins must have fallen from the trousers he was carrying. He picked them up and slid them into his pocket.

"I'm dickering right now," he goaded, "with an outfit that wants to put a parking lot on this site. It might pay me to tear down your shop, Blinz. And good riddance."

At these words Mr. Blinz rapped again in anguish, and two more pennies spun on the linoleum at his feet. Mr. Appelstruther snatched up this new offering as well and counted his small change hastily. He looked perplexed.

"Not mine," he grunted, "but finders keepers. You must have a hole in your pocket, Blinz. Now, if you'd like to drop a little bigger hunk of dough where I could find it—say, six hundred dollars to cover a new store front. . . . No? Then your place can rot for all of me. And that's final!" Whereupon he stalked to the door, wrenched it open with some effort, and managed to slam it behind him.

"The ugly brute!" exclaimed Miss Gottschalk, bursting through the curtains like an avenging fury. "Why didn't you tell him off? And why should you slave away in a dreary hole like this in the first place; a man who owns the books you do? I had no idea you could read Italian, French and German as well as English, Mr. Blinz. Really, I'm quite impressed."

Words, thought Mr. Blinz, but not unhappily. It was to voices rather than words that he had learned to listen, and for the first time since he had known her, Miss Gottschalk's voice was interested and even kind. He was too concerned over the matter of the pennies to enter into a discussion with her, however, so he merely nudged his ears with his shoulders in a brief shrug and bent to adjust the folds of her skirt.

Not to be distracted, Miss Gottschalk tugged her cuffs into place and snapped, "He shouldn't take illegal bonuses from the tenants. And he won't put you out. I won't let him!"

"So how can you stop him? Mr. Appelstruther is a big man in the city. He is my landlord. He is also—"

"He is also my uncle," Miss Gottchalk interrupted stiffly, "and a lout and a bully as well. He has administered my father's estate since I was twelve years old. He used to be my guardian too, until I came of age. Is it any wonder I have no use for men?"

"*Gewalt!*" exclaimed Mr. Blinz, "You *own* this place?"

"I will when I'm—never mind how old. Pretty soon, now."

MR. BLINZ rapped on wood again without thinking. He just couldn't help it. Naturally, two more pennies jingled to the floor, and with that he knew for certain what was happening. The back of his neck prickled but, since Miss Gottschalk was staring at the coins, he picked them up and handed them to her.

"Those are not—didn't my uncle say you

had a hole in your pocket?" she asked.

"There is no hole in the pocket," he replied quietly, hoping she would not understand what that meant.

Mr. Blinz came from a land where gnomes, elves and poltergeists were commonplace. In their own surroundings they were all very well, but the unexplained presence of one of the Little People in Akron, Ohio—and in his shop at that—was practically indecent. He would have to be nice to the thing and get rid of it quickly. But first it was necessary to get rid of Miss Gottschalk.

She was fumbling in her pocketbook. "Strange. How do you suppose they could have got out of my change purse? Well, no matter. Don't worry about your shop, Mr. Bliñz—I'll take care of the matter somehow. And come in to see me when you want more regional reading material." Miss Gottschalk bestowed her first warm smile upon him and left briskly, taking the morning sunshine with her.

Mr. Blinz watched her cross the street again before turning to do what was needed. He made the proper signs with reluctance, for he could not rid himself of the thought that a place of business in a snappy, up-to-date town like Akron, Ohio, was no place for raffish and irresponsible elements from the Black Forest. However, the old words came back to him readily enough, and presently, from behind the counter but quite close to the floor, there came the sound of a throat being cleared.

"Luck to all in this house," a small voice squeaked, "not saying what kind. And be good enough not to knock-for pennies again this instant, man dear. 'Tis worn out I am by me long journey."

"An Irisher yet!" Mr. Blinz whispered to himself with something akin to horror, and stopped his knuckles from rapping only just in time. Aloud he said politely, "Likewise you are hungry, maybe?"

"Roger," replied the gremlin, a veteran that had seen action with a bombardment squadron and had no intention of letting anyone forget it. "I'd thank ye for a bowl of gruel or whatever."

Mr. Blinz sighed. He had no gruel, of course, but on impulse he shook out a saucerful of crisp cereal flakes, poured in some milk, and pushed the dish around behind the counter. There followed that crackle of miniature explosions which was a regular rite, or so the advertisements claimed, at the breakfast tables of millions of small Americans. There followed also a stunned silence on the part of his unseen guest.

Then the steam hose came loose from the pressing machine, half the garments on the ready rack were thrown from their hangers, and the light bulb detached itself from its overhead socket and struck Mr. Blinz smartly on his bald spot, where it exploded with atomic effect.

"Bedad and that last pop all but carried me jaw away!" shrilled the little voice vindictively. "'Tis no more of *that* I'll be having if you've ought else in the cupboard."

Thoroughly befuddled by the concussion from the shattered light bulb, Mr. Blinz groped in his ice box and came up with a chunk of smoked salmon. "Some lox you could try, then," he offered in haste, "and maybe a bagel to go with." Trembling slightly, he cut a paper-thin sample of the rosy fish, slid it behind the counter on another saucer, and handed down a varnished ring-shaped roll from a bag on the shelf. "Enjoy in good health," he added politely.

"Friday again?" the gremlin complained. "Ah, well, you can join me when you get back from mass."

"Who, me?" sputtered Mr. Blinz.

"You that's the O'Finnegan whose family name I bear," the gremlin told him, though there was a note of uncertainty behind the words. "'Tis assigned to this address I am and O'Finnegan your name must be, though this is not the fine house you wrote about in the parish records."

"Vinnegan?" Mr. Blinz shook his head and tried not to look too relieved. "You got the wrong man already. Irishers they don't have in this place since canal days. This Vinnegan, he has maybe moved out West with his children and his children's children. How should I know?"

"Vinnegan, you call it?" the gremlin mused. "It's the Yank manner of speaking, belike, and easier on the tongue than Erse, which I'd not the wit to learn. That's why I'm here. The government—"

"From Ireland you're a refugee?" Mr. Blinz broke in with quick sympathy.

"From Eire," the gremlin corrected. "I've no identity card, mind you. The authorities—"

"Never mind, stay, and welcome." For

Mr. Blinz, the decision to open his heart to a homeless wanderer was easily taken. A displaced person himself, he felt it his duty to help anyone else in the same situation, even a gremlin. As for the missing identity card and the failure to note a change of address for fifty years or so, bureaucrats were forever herding the helpless from place to place without proper information or credentials.

Remembering what it was like to be at the mercy of such *dumkopfs,* he knocked on wood again.

To his surprise, not two but four pennies rattled to the floor. He rapped once more, unbelievingly, and eight pennies bounced on the faded linoleum. A third knock brought sixteen additional coins; and a fourth, thirty-two. Mr. Blinz counted them hastily and rapped again for luck, being somewhat confused. Sixty-four pennies showered down at his feet.

At that moment the saucer upon which he had placed the lox came whizzing out from behind the counter. It was empty. "A strange dish, but very tasty indade," piped his guest. "It's making a new gremlin of me. Ye've more?"

Dazedly Mr. Blinz laid another slice of smoked salmon on the plate and slid it back behind the counter. He was beginning to have his doubts, but it is necessary to make certain in matters of diet. Then he rapped on wood again—and one more time, and hunched his shoulders against the clatter of, first, one hundred and twenty-eight, then two hundred and fifty-six coppers.

"Vinnegan!" he cried. "Every time it's doubling up already!"

And he snatched the plate back again before more of the fish could disappear.

AT ONCE the calendar fell off the wall, a crack appeared in the mirror, and a large segment of plaster detached itself from around an old leak in the ceiling and showered down upon him in sizeable chunks.

"Mind your manners, laddie buck," the gremlin squeaked. "Is it daft ye are? 'Tis no part of kindness to take back what is given."

"Something is wrong yet!" Mr. Blinz puffed indignantly, blowing away the plaster dust. "I show you already."

He knocked again and yet again, and then another time for good measure. Hastily he cowered back against the wall. When the five hundred and twelfth, the one thousand and twenty-fourth, and the two thousand and forty-eighth pennies had stopped their jiggling and spinning on the floor, there was a little silence.

"Saints and angels!" Finnegan breathed. "Never was I allowed to do that before; never at all, at all. Two pennies I was rationed, and two of them I got. Knock again, man, and be quick about it! Whist! I've but to catch the hang of it, and—"

Mr. Blinz started to say something and thought better of it, having the uncertain temper of his guest in mind. He shrugged instead, and gave the signal for the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth times since the geometric progression had begun. Then he reached for a pencil and paper. Coppers danced on the floor like raindrops on a pavement as he wet the lead and began to calculate.

"Making already four thousand and ninety-six pennies in the first batch," he announced at last. "Should be eight thousand one hundred ninety-two in the next delivery. And sixteen thousand three hundred eighty-four in the last lot, with maybe a little discount for cash. It must be something you ate," he ventured timidly. "Could be the lox is positively not good for you."

"That bit of fish? Never in the world! 'Tis free enterprise does it," squeaked Finnegan. "Ah, but America is good to the Irish. Give it another try, man! Lively now!"

"Better we shouldn't—" Mr. Blinz began, but something smote his wrist, and his knuckles struck involuntarily on the smooth board of the counter. He found himself ankle deep in pennies, an additional thirty two thousand, seven hundred and sixty eight of them, if his hasty figures were correct.

"Once more will be getting you the new store front," Finnegan tempted, "and bad cess to all landlords."

Mr. Blinz nodded absently. Until that moment Finnegan's antics had been merely curious phenomena; for the first time they now took on a personal meaning to him. If he could avoid extortion by Appelstruther, yet pay for a new store front in faery gold —he drew a deep breath and knocked again, and the blur of copper rain lasted for some time. The floor creaked alarmingly.

"Six hundred fifty-five dollars and thirty-six cents worth," Mr. Blinz gulped, looking up from his calculations after a moment. "Better you should pile them in stacks of fifty, Vinnegan. Some wrappers I am getting from the bank, and a wheelbarrow."

"Efficiency, is it?" Finnegan sighed and mumbled something, and the pennies arranged themselves in ordered heaps. "Now then, a bit more of the fish before you go, me good man, while I accustom myself to the heady sense of power that has come upon me. 'Tis worn out I am with the wonder of it all."

Outside the door of his shop, Mr. Blinz pondered the thing that had happened to him. It was as nothing compared with the miracle of Main Street shining through the exhaust fumes, its air now heavy with the roar of traffic. Here was growth and opportunity and a place for a man to make a name for himself! Now that his new store front was assured, Mr. Blinz asked only one thing more. There was still Miss Gottschalk's hand to be won. He braced his shoulders happily.

"Good morning!" he chirped to Mr. Updegraff, who was lurking in the depths of his newsstand.

"What's good about it?" Mr. Updegraff inquired sourly. "Given the traffic noise and stink of gasoline and all the crooked people in this town, a man can't get a peaceful moment to himself any more. Now they're taking my pennies while my back is turned."

"Pennies someone is stealing?" gasped Mr. Blinz.

"Seven dollars worth from me," Mr. Updegraff nodded with a mournful pride in his loss, "and nineteen dollars from the candy shop next door. Even the big merchants are complaining. But the police won't be able to do a thing. It's an organized mob, see?"

"These thefts are reported already?"

"Sure. It just came in over the radio. 'Sales Tax Receipts Gone, Gum and Candy Machines Looted, Penny Famine Feared.' Somebody's got a new angle," the news vendor snarled. "If you ask me, it's politics—"

But Mr. Blinz had scuttled back to his own shop. Finnegan, having finished the lox, was evidently asleep, for he got a yawning response from the gremlin only after the most strenuous efforts.

"Sure and they come from the nearest pockets," the small voice rasped in answer to his host's questions. "And who's to quarrel with that? 'Tis but the rich and the authorities has coins on their persons. The poor man with no more than a hen to bless him is hard put to spare an egg to trade for a pinch of tea—"

"*Schlemiel!*" cried Mr. Blinz excitedly. "This is America yet! Money from others we are not stealing! Since the roof came down around my ears back home in Middleplatz, never am I hearing of such foolishness!"

"Ah, Middleplatz!" piped Finnegan with satisfaction, glad to change the subject. "I mind it well. Was it not myself took charge of that very mission? And when the bombs intended for the German barracks five miles beyond went tumbling down on that innocent village—"

Mr. Blinz held his head.

"Seven hundred pennies you will take back to Mr. Updegraff," he said at last, and sternly. "Nineteen hundred to the candy store. About the others I will ask by the Public Library. And you get no supper."

MAIN Street had turned gray when he regained the sidewalk, and there seemed to be a policeman on every corner. Mr. Blinz made his way to the library and sought the refuge of Miss Gottschalk's desk. He told her about Finnegan with the greatest embarrassment, because it did not seem proper to admit Old Country afflictions had followed him into his new life. This was America, not Europe. This was the industrial Twentieth Century, not the middle ages. Finnegan should not exist but he did.

"Here are the names of some books," she said coldly when he had finished, "which will prove to you that there are no elves except in fairy tales. Just take them to the table over there, walking quietly of course, and read them for yourself."

"How did the pennies get out from your purse?" Mr. Blinz interrupted hotly. "V'at is the explanation—"

"*What* is the explanation," Miss Gottschalk corrected automatically, but his question raised doubts in her mind. She was not inclined toward carelessness in matters of money, nor indeed in anything else. "Of course," she added, "if you would care to

demonstrate your—your strange powers before intelligent and unprejudiced witnesses—"

Mr. Blinz sighed, thinking how completely one hundred and thirty-one thousand, nought seven-two pennies would cover the library floor. However, he shrugged and raised his knuckles.

"Not in here," Miss Gottschalk protested hastily. "The office of the newspaper is the place for that sort of—er, publicity stunt. Here in America our press affords an open forum for oddities of all kinds. I will call the city editor and tell him to expect us."

The city editor of the *Daily Beacon* was a dour man in horn-rimmed spectacles, not easily moved to laughter. He laughed at Mr. Blinz, however, when he heard about Finnegan, and he laughed at Miss Gottschalk as well.

"It sounds ridiculous, naturally—" she reddened—"but I know Mr. Blinz to be an educated person. And after all, the pennies have disappeared. It is merely a matter of having him show us, if he can, what has happened to them."

"Okay." The city editor grinned at Mr. Blinz. "Go ahead."

"In here yet?" Mr. Blinz demurred, looking around the small office. "Is dangerous. Better we should have more room."

"I'll take a chance," said the editor. "Knock, kid."

Mr. Blinz wet his lips nervously. With great difficulty he persuaded Miss Gottschalk to get up on a chair, where she stood poised and remote. Like a goddess, he thought, stretching forth his knuckles. Several times he lost his nerve; but at last, with her nod to encourage him, he rapped once, twice, three times.

Nothing happened.

After a moment the editor muttered in a dry voice, "Outside, bud. This is my busy day."

Miss Gottschalk said, "Mr. Blinz, I'm disappointed in you," and got down from her chair.

Mr. Blinz knocked again, desperately, and yet again.

"That Vinnegan," he groaned. "He is not cooperating already. His feelings I am hurting, or maybe he is asleep back at the store. So you should come down to my shop yet; I show you the pennies anyhow. That much I can do without him. Please," he added as both Miss Gottschalk and the editor shook their heads. "The pennies are there, and I wish to be a good citizen. Be so kindly!"

"Maybe it's a gag," the city editor whispered to Miss Gottschalk. "Maybe he stole the pennies and then got scared. I'll send a leg man, and if the coins are there he'll call the cops. They'll take our friend to the cooler where he belongs, and that will be that."

"Oh, but you can't. He mustn't. They shouldn't," cried Miss Gottschalk.

But the editor could, and the reporter felt he must, and the police were sure they should, for of course the pennies were there. The Federal Reserve Branch sent an armored truck for them; and the station house sent a patrol wagon for Mr. Blinz, who got a nice dry cell all to himself, as befitted a major embezzler of funds. Mr. Blinz promptly flung himself down upon the cot and buried his face in his hands.

"Back to potatoes again," squeaked a small voice disgustedly, "though who'd be thinking ye daft enough to fall into the hands of the military?"

"By us Americans," Mr. Blinz corrected through his fingers, "is a civil court with judge and jury yet. *Gewalt!* Vinnegan!" he exclaimed. "Better you should stick around when I need you. Such troubles I got! No shop front, and no shop maybe. Even no citizenship, who knows?"

"My aching back," sniffed the gremlin. " 'Tis unwelcome I felt, with ye wailing of wrongdoing and the promise of no supper."

"So soon I am getting out of here," Mr. Blinz assured him, "lox with cream cheese you are getting. Only show these people oncet."

"Hist! The guard!" warned Finnegan.

The jail attendant unlocked the door. "Lady to see you," he said politely enough to Mr. Blinz, and led him to the visitors' room. Miss Gottschalk was waiting, her eyes troubled.

"I am sorry to see you here, Mr. Blinz," she murmured stiffly. "You have been on my conscience. I feel responsible for—is there anything you need? Anything I can do for you?"

"Not even a lawyer can help him much, lady," the guard said. "They ain't any elves in America. Everybody knows that."

AT ONCE the guard's chair skidded out from under him, his cap fell to the floor, his keys hurtled across the room, and all the drawers of his desk popped open, exploding a gale of papers. Mr. Blinz made a quick appraisal of the terrain. The heavy steel mesh that separated him from Miss Gottschalk seemed sturdy enough to protect her, and the range of cell blocks on his side, while not roomy, was strong.

"Two slices of lox, Vinnegan," he promised, poising his knuckles above the wooden counter across which prisoners faced their visitors, "with cream cheese." He knocked and there was a great rattling and clanging against the steel bars, and on the concrete floor; and there he stood, up to his neck in pennies. Miss Gottschalk clung to the netting unbelievingly. It bulged but held.

"Lieutenant!" screamed the guard, "I seen him do it! I seen him, I tell you. The guy's a human slot machine! Get that reporter up here quick, and come look at all this dough!"

The police reporter left his checker game in the City Hall basement and grabbed a phone. His report brought the city editor on the run. That veteran newspaperman was still strangely reluctant to admit the evidence of his own eyes.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" snapped Miss Gottschalk. "Mr. Blinz has given a psychic demonstration under the most adverse conditions, and you won't credit him—"

"Everybody is standing back," Mr. Blinz ordered grimly, and raised his knuckles again.

"Wup! Take it easy, Mr. Blinz!" the city editor implored. "Don't do it any more! The governor of the Federal Reserve District was on the phone before I left. Most of these pennies in this last lot are new, I notice. You've already cleaned out all the cash drawers for miles around. Now you've got back into the bank vaults, apparently. Maybe even into the mint, for all I know," he added in some alarm.

"Then," pressed Miss Gottschalk, "you will give Mr. Blinz the recognition he deserves without further demonstration?"

The city editor shook his head regretfully. "I can't touch the story. Who'd ever believe it? The owner would—well, thank God he's in Florida. Now look, Mr. Blinz," he urged. "You don't really want to be a nine-day wonder, do you? Try to see this thing my way. Every big newspaper has a few stories that it keeps to itself; stories that are too local, too 'inside' to print. You can play this thing two ways. You can have your publicity; or you can be one of the men who really count for something in this town. Lay off and I'll see to it that you're invited to join the Chamber of Commerce and one of the luncheon clubs. Maybe even the Round Table."

Mr. Blinz's expression was one of awe. "The Main Street Round Table?" he asked. "In the dining room of the big hotel?"

"In the heart of the business district," the city editor confirmed. "You'll be a member of the Regulars, Mr. Blinz, with your own napkin ring and lots of chances to serve on committees."

"Ah-h-h," breathed Mr. Blinz, and closed his eyes blissfully.

The armored truck came again and dug Mr. Blinz out of his heap of pennies, and that should have been the end of the matter.

But in dealing with the Little People, as in dealing with governments, nothing is ever as simple as one expects. True, Mr. Blinz was careful to put out the two slices of lox before retiring. He even remembered the cream cheese. Nevertheless, he went to bed that night with an uneasy feeling. It was midnight when someone rattled at his door. Mr. Blinz opened up crossly, for he had been dreaming that he had both his new store front *and* Miss Gottschalk's promise to attend a Ladies' Day Luncheon as his special guest.

"It's me, Blinz," said Mr. Appelstruther. "Sorry to bother you at this late hour, but I've just heard about your trick way to coin money. Now it happens I ain't had much luck lately in some of my real estate transactions, and if you could see your way clear to work it again—"

"No," said Mr. Blinz firmly. "Who are these men?"

"Just a couple of—friends I brought along, in case you should happen to act contrary. Sure you won't change your mind, Blinz? I'd cut you in. Just a couple of knocks and you'd own this building, lock, stock and barrel. Then you could have any kind of a store front you wanted."

"No," said Mr. Blinz again. "It is not good for business."

Mr. Appelstruther clucked with impatience and nodded to one of his friends, who prepared to take certain measures with Mr. Blinz. The prospective victim curled up in a corner and fixed his mind against what was coming, as he had once fixed it against men with rubber truncheons. Mr. Blinz had been worked over by experts in his day, and he was sure he could withstand the worst Mr. Appelstruther could do to him. Besides, he hoped to become a Main Street Regular, which imposed some obligations; and there was Miss Gottschalk to keep in mind.

Miss Gottschalk would expect him to fight back.

"When the money is missing again, the police will come," he mentioned hopefully.

"We thought of that." Mr. Appelstruther grinned. "Sure the cops will come some time but by that time we will be long gone. We've got a getaway car outside. And who's gonna trace a lot of pennies?"

Mr. Blinz was sure that he would be gone, too—and probably without a trace—by the time the police got there. But just then an idea occurred to him. "I am not sure if the gremlin is still around yet," he stalled, reflecting that two hundred and sixty two thousand, one hundred and forty four pennies would weigh a great deal; and that twice as many would weigh twice as much; and that the floor of his shop was rickety, due to Mr. Appelstruther's neglect.

"Divil a bit of that fine fish is left save the one tiny slice," squeaked Finnegan just then, attracted as always by the smell of trouble. "If I had but the promise of it, I'd spit on my hands and—"

Mr. Blinz felt better right away. "So all right." He shrugged. "Stand in the middle of the floor, everybody, if you will be so kindly." Well-versed in the ways of falling walls, he fixed his own eyes on the shelter of the sturdy door frame at the front of the shop. Then he knocked for the seventeenth time, and for the eighteenth—just to make sure—and rolled to safety.

THE copper rain that submerged Mr. Appelstruther and his friends burst the bounds of the flimsy storeroom and washed Mr. Blinz out into the street on its crest. The floor collapsed under the weight of three quarter of a million coins, and the roof above followed it into the cellar. The walls toppled inward with a terrible roar, and the building upon which his landlord had refused to spend any money crumbled into shards.

Among those shards the proper authorities dug next day; pleased when they found thick layers of pennies; not so pleased when they found thin layers of Mr. Appelstruther and his friends. As for Mr. Blinz, he soon learned that business acumen was not the key to Miss Gottschalk's heart, and that she was in fact—like so many people who have always been well-fixed—actually scornful of money-getting skill in others. However, overcome by his scholarly background, which he never displayed, and by his past sufferings, which he refused to discuss, as well as by the urge to correct his English at greater leisure, she married Mr. Blinz anyhow, eloping with him to Bowling Green, Ohio, for that purpose.

Now she stays home and keeps house for him, reading his books while he drives her car, and is seldom seen at Library Board meetings.

Mr. Blinz is back in business, of course. The insurance company, after some hemming and hawing over the cause of its collapse, rebuilt his shop with air conditioning; and the estate owner—the former Miss Gottschalk—saw to it that the façade suited him in every particular. His new store front is modern, colorful and well-lighted, and attracts so many customers that Mr. Blinz recently was able to buy the adjoining building from Mr. Updegraff, who lost interest in art photographs after his wife died and has moved to St. Petersburg, Florida. The word at the Round Table is that Blinz intends to run an arcade through to Howard Street and perhaps add extra departments for haberdashery and expert, continental hand tailoring.

* * *

"HE'LL make a sucess of it, too," McQuoit finished with a triumphant air. "It just goes to show you that love conquers all."

Naturally I felt compelled to catch him up sharply. After all, I was once a newspaperman myself and I still have a reporter's eye for detail. Just how, I asked, did

the story of Mr. Blinz and Miss Gottschalk explain the penny shortage? It seemed to me that, if the Federal Reserve people had recovered all the coins, the situation must have reverted to status quo. McQuoit merely gave me a pitying glance.

"Figure it out for yourself," he said. "Plain, ordinary arithmetic will give you part of the answer. The last time Blinz knocked on wood he must have gathered in practically every penny in Ohio, Indiana, and parts of Western Pennsylvania. Right? Now it stands to reason that thousands of those coins were never called for by their owners. Most people haven't any idea how many pennies they've got around the house, tucked away in collar boxes, teapots, bureau drawers and so on. Then there was the question of proving ownership. Oh! The kids knew how much they had coming, all right, but hardly anyone else did. So, naturally, there were several truckloads of unclaimed coins left over."

"Why not turn them back to the banks?" I wanted to know.

"Impossible. You ought to know the government better than that! Ordinarily, unclaimed valuables would go to the finder —that's Mr. Blinz—at the end of one year. In this case, however, since Blinz is not yet a citizen, they were turned over to the Alien Property Custodian, to be held until he gets his final papers several years hence. Meanwhile, obviously, they're out of circulation. *That,* my friend, is what's at the bottom of the shortage."

"And Finnegan?" I pressed, not quite satisfied.

"Oh, he's in Washington now, apparently. After all, a household of newlyweds offers very few opportunities for a gremlin, and the best guess is that Finnegan got so bored he left Blinz altogether. Sometimes, when the air conditioning in the new shop is not working right, or his wife's car won't start, Blinz is sure that Finnegan has returned, but thus far his offerings of lox have gone uneaten. It was Mrs. Blinz who deduced that Finnegan, with his natural Irish passion for politics, must have got into the government somehow and gone right to the top. But then, Mrs. Blinz is a property-owner, as well as a born Republican."

I thought this over for a minute. It sounded plausible. "But what makes you so sure Finnegan is in Washington?" I demanded, checking every possible hole in his story.

"Oh, come now!" McQuoit sniffed. "Ask anyone. For instance, what do you suppose it was that just upset your drink?"

It was not I, certainly, and I said as much.

"Of course not," agreed McQuoit, "but you'll want another, won't you?" Half turning in his chair he raised both his voice and a beckoning finger. "Waiter!" he called cheerfully. "Two more."

IDAHO'S PANHANDLE PIKE

IN RAILROAD MAGAZINE'S December issue Phil Hastings is back again with his camera, the same camera that is fast becoming the most railroad-wise Speed Graflex in America. This time Hastings turns his lens on the Camas Prairie, little-known subsidiary of the giant NP and UP. The results, from rugged Idaho's storied canyon country, are fabulous, as you'll agree when you see the 25 great steam railroad pictures and read the story in "Idaho's Panhandle Pike." The experience will be as much of a vacation for you as it was for Phil Hastings. December Railroad on sale October 31, or send 35c to

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SHADOW OF HELL

By

ROLAND WILD

Now Larsen would be looking at Brady's scarred back—Brady kept his head down, over the castle shaped like a cross. . . .

In a reason to kill, Don Brady surprisingly found—a reason to live!

THIS was the great day—he was going on the beach. Don Brady was taking his battered and scarred body and head among the public. The sun-bathing had hidden some of the scars. His new jaw, that the doctors had given him after such pain, melted into the real Don Brady with no more than a thin line under his chin. The new nose they thought would suit the new Don Brady—the nose was natural and no longer a twisted travesty on his face. They had doctored Don Brady's mind too; his fears were half conquered, and he had half persuaded himself that he was a whole man. But it had been a long fight to force himself onto the beach in swimming trunks, revealing the long wounds in his side, the incisions where the silver plate was let into his thigh, the patchwork patterns on his back. War had long consequences.

So he was glad the beach was crowded.

His right leg dragged a little, but he made his way between the raucous children, the families grouped together, the lovers and the sun-worshippers. And as he moved through the throng, his eyes were still engaged in the search.

It was the search that had kept him going through the months in hospital, the weeks when his eyes were covered, the slow uphill fight towards recovery. The doctors had at first been nervous of the quest that always filled his mind, that had become to him a holy crusade. Then, when they realised the intensity of his hate, they knew they could never eradicate it; better let it be the mission to which the rest of his life was devoted. He would always be peering into faces, switching his eyes over crowds, looking for one man.

He did this now. He had no interest in human beings, only searching for one face. His eyes were narrowed against the bright California sun. There was a curious, dead look in them, caused by the new structure of his forehead. The hairline grew low to hide the deep scar right around his head. He had the look of a grim young man, old beyond his years. But the search he was on —that added the years.

It could not be good for his mind that he was always thinking he saw the man. There now—was there something in the head of that man over there? He moved over a little, and looked again. It wasn't the man.

Over there a man was lying down with his eyes shut, close to a girl with yellow halter and trunks. The man wore sun-glasses. Brady moved back of him, bent his gaze onto his face. It wasn't Francis Larsen.

Sometimes he wondered whether Larsen had changed his face. Larsen couldn't know he was being hunted. Larsen couldn't know another man had got out of that trap in the Tunis desert.

THROUGH the black months of pain, Don Brady had lived again every moment of those twenty-four hours, and had begun to think with the mind of Larsen. There had been twenty-three of them on the patrol. Brady, the commander, gave the signal for the return, after a night's traveling by jeep in the desert, and figured that he had a good report to make to headquarters. Then they had run into the German patrol. Brady didn't want to fight, for his information was more valuable than an engagement. They had run for it, only to find the German patrol was part of a large reconnoitering force, looking for trouble. Brady ordered them to do just what he wanted to avoid—halt in the desert and attempt to fend off attack and capture.

Everything had gone wrong from that moment. The jeep bogged down and the sun came up. There was no cover, and the best they could hope for was delay and the remote possibility of a scout plane seeing them and blasting the Germans away when a squadron could reach them. Brady ordered his twenty-two men to dig.

It had been a curious formation when they finished. They had run into an outcropping of rock, and the shallow trench and earthworks they threw up were not according to the book. They had taken advantage of the rock, and at the end of an hour Brady looked over their position and found it was the best they could do. It was in the shape of a cross.

Through that day they held off the patrol. Their automatics were well-placed, with a full field of fire, and the Germans were not risking anything, and had time on their hands. Brady hoped to move on that night. There was trouble with one of the jeeps, but it suited his plan. For he figured he could only move if he bamboozled the Germans, making them think he was still there. Brady and two other men were to stay till the last, keeping up steady fire to cover the sound of the five departing jeeps. They had moved the immobilized jeep into a prominent position, so that in the night the German patrol could see it still there. Brady and his two men were to run for it when the others had left. Brady lay down with his twenty-two men and told them the plan.

"I don't like it myself," he said. "It's only bad luck that we ran into trouble, and got bogged down here. The information we can give is more valuable than knocking off a few Krauts. But now we've got in this, we've got to get out, and that's the only way I can think of. We can only get away with it if the Krauts are dumb as hell. . . ."

He knew this was an understatement. The enemy had to be blind and deaf as well as dumb. But the men nodded, chewed gum, split the last of the K-rations, and

talked about women. Brady waited for nightfall with better confidence because of it.

The Germans chose dusk to try and finish it off. They had a small mortar which lobbed death with expert accuracy, and the cross-like fort of sand was poor protection. The flaming desert sunset was put to shame by the crackle of machine gun fire, the livid explosion of the mortar, tracer bullets that ripped through the poor defences, and star shells that showed Brady that eight of his twenty-two men were no longer firing. Four of them were dead. Three were cursing, tearing at their sweat-blackened shirts, and one was screaming.

The light flickered and fell, and the black desert night was blacker still, ripped only by the tracers that seemed to stream leisurely towards them. Brady jumped to an automatic, thrust aside the two dead men, and manned it himself. Then the night had changed to day again; a bright, beautiful cascade of light exploded over their heads, and Brady looked around quickly to learn the worst.

It was the worst that he learned. A jeep was sputtering and already crawling out of the tiny, impromptu fort. The wheels spun, and the engine raced, and the four wheels gripped as the star-shell dipped and died. It was Larsen, making a run for it.

"Larsen!" Brady shouted, and started up.

A bullet chipped the rock away in front of him, and the piece carved flesh out of his arm the size of a three-decker sandwich. He dropped, then lifted his head, and shouted again: "Larsen, you bastard!"

At once, he figured that even if Larsen had heard, he would have confused the two words. But he could not have heard. Brady pulled his revolver from the holster and followed the jeep with four shots. Then he gave it up as hopeless. Larsen was away—and with him any hope they had of evacuating the post.

From that moment on, Brady had always tried to figure the situation with the mind of Larsen. He had wrecked the plan of the patrol to get out of the pathetic little fort. He must have been certain that every man would be killed where he lay. He could not be secure if there were a man left alive, for that man would be after Larsen for the rest of his life.

Brady broke out his first aid pack and bound his hand. He squirmed back to the other men, and told them what they knew already, that Larsen had halved their chances of escape. They muttered quietly and turned their eyes again to the enemy. All of them knew they were unimportant people—the patrol was unimportant, their lives or deaths were trivial. Soon, the big push would be on, and their fate would be forgotten. The beautiful tracer bullets came loping towards them again in perfect arcs, and the star-shells cascaded their loveliness.

"Times Square," said one man. "What a circus—"

EVEN now, as he made his way through the crowd on the hot beach, Brady had in his mind this last picture of Larsen, crouched over the steering wheel of the jeep, racing the engine. He knew the set of his shoulders, his heavy black eyebrows, the set of his ears on his head, the roll of his walk. In big cities, at ball games, in hotel lobbies and theaters, Brady had found himself judging every profile of a man by this standard—how did he measure up to Larsen?

There wasn't much living when the Germans had methodically finished their siege of the patrol. They had moved, of course, to cut off the route of the other jeeps, and one jeep was blazing merrily by midnight. The ammunition was running out before dawn, and Brady was alone with six other living men when the Germans attacked. They ran over the shambles in the shape of a cross with brutal efficiency. They kept on firing as they moved in from two sides, and soon there was silence. Brady didn't know anything about it. He had a confused memory of his leg dragging, and his astonishment when he saw the angle at which it lay. He knew that this was blood that he tasted in his mouth, and the fold over his right eye was part of his forehead. He didn't speak because the blood was welling in his throat, and he didn't move because the mortar fragments had torn open his back and thigh, churning up his shirt and his skin and his flesh. He knew little of the butt of a rifle crashing onto his ear, for he was taken for dead, and he should

have been dead. All the others were.

All this he tried to reason out weeks later when they told him he'd been in the Tunis hospital for a whole month. The big push had crashed through, and Brady was one of the smallest incidents. They had picked him up from the carnage of the patrol, and nobody was very interested anyway, only in the elaborate reconstruction job that was going to be done on Captain Donald Brady, in Cannes, London, New York and California. Indeed, they even told him to forget all about the war and Tunisia. That was before they took his mind in hand, and heard about the quest for Larsen.

They had done pretty well with what was left of Brady, and the doctors were pleased when he steeled himself to go on the beach in trunks. And they knew by this time that his mind would be centered on the quest, the one motive that drove him among his fellow-men. He was only going out to look for Larsen, but they didn't mind as long as he went out.

It didn't discourage him, this perpetual feeling that he had at last found Larsen, that he recognized the shoulders, or the ears, or the hairline of Larsen. It had happened very often, but he knew it would before he really found him. How many people were there in the United States? How many men were there who could have been in the war? It might take him a long time to find Larsen, but he had nothing else to do, no other interest in life.

Over there? A man was kneeling over a portable radio, his ear close to it. Larsen's ear? But it wasn't Larsen's face. Against the sun, there was the profile of a man waiting to catch a ball. Brady walked to one side of him. He didn't do these things consciously any more. It was automatic. The man caught the ball. It wasn't Larsen.

Larsen wouldn't know Brady even if he heard he had achieved the miracle and escaped from the patrol. Brady sometimes laughed at this, knowing his old friends hadn't recognized the new Brady face, the old man's look in the eyes, the changed set of his jaw and his mouth. He had the advantage of Larsen there. All he had to do was to find Larsen.

He had come down to the beach to please the doctors, to show he wasn't embarrassed any longer by his patched body, the scars hidden under the tan. But his obsession was primary once he had got there. He moved through the happy crowds, stepping aside from the unruly children, his eyes flickering over them, not appreciating them. Then he sat down on the sand. The sun was good, and he felt it smoothing over his shattered body, knitting it together. He could enjoy this as a secondary pleasure. He had all the time in the world to spend. He had lived two lives already. He thought of himself as a happy man, with his mind made up, with one ambition in life, and that quite clear. A man with a motive, he told himself, was a happy man. He closed his eyes.

Then he heard Larsen.

The voice came to him with only a flutter of excitement in his heart. He heard Larsen say: "Nuts! The kid had an ice cream not ten minutes back!"

Brady had often wondered what phrase Larsen would be using when he first heard him. It could have been dramatic, or trivial. It might have been Larsen asking for a paper on a busy street. It didn't matter. He had found Larsen.

Brady opened his eyes and rolled on his side. Larsen was twenty feet away, sitting with his back to him. Brady recognised the back, the ears, the hair. With Larsen was a pretty blonde woman, in gray slacks and a white shirt. Larsen was in trunks, brown and putting on fat. Between Larsen and the girl was a little boy, around five years of age. He was looking petulant and hot. He had been trying the age-old small-boy trick of dividing his parents on a decision, and he had lost. He wasn't going to get another ice cream.

Brady closed his eyes again and took in the full flavor of the moment. He had often wondered what it would be like, to find Larsen. He knew that the circumstances of Larsen, where he found him and whom he was with, would make no difference. He had just wondered what effect it would have on himself, Brady. He had wondered if his hate, fed by the months of pain and the memory of those dead men, would cause him to leap into some precipitate action. He didn't think so. He had waited too long for this. He didn't even feel any great triumph. There was only this deep feeling of satisfaction, and fulfillment. He opened his eyes and looked at Larsen's back.

"Okay," Larsen said. "Let him get sick! Let him get another ice cream!"

But now the mother took this as a reason why the child should not have the ice cream. Brady listened idly to their argument. He had all the time in the world. He wanted them to know, later, how unimportant this all was. . . .

THE child wandered away, disconsolate. His feet brought him in Brady's direction, and he stopped beside him, staring. The boy suddenly sat down, began to be busy with his hands in the sand. He smiled his pleasure when Brady leaned over and helped him scoop the sand into a castle. The boy was utterly absorbed, the ice cream forgotten. The castle took shape.

"Daddy!" the boy said. "The man's making a castle!"

The castle was finished. The boy seemed pleased with it, then abruptly pushed it over with his hands.

"Build another!" he commanded.

Brady built another. He was lying on the sand, propped up on one elbow. He felt a shadow on his back. Larsen's voice was right above him.

"Don't let the kid bother you," Larsen said.

"It's okay," Brady said. He wondered whether Larsen would remember his voice. He wondered if Larsen was looking at the healed rents in his back. Larsen's shadow was still, a big and ominous shadow over the man and the castle.

Brady's hand faltered, and returned to the task again with vigor. He changed the original idea of the new castle. He found four small rocks, and put them in place. His hand worked faster, fashioning the ramparts of the castle. He felt that his eyes were bright, and he was glad Larsen was above him and would not see what was in his eyes. The rocks were in their place, and the soft sand held together and the fort was nearly finished. Brady felt that it might have been a gasp that he heard behind him. It could have been Larsen catching his breath—or it could have been Larsen chuckling at the child.

"Look, daddy!" the child said. "The castle's a cross!"

Brady stilled his hand. Now he was certain that Larsen's breath came with difficulty. Now he could picture the sweat breaking out on Larsen's forehead, as he had so often pictured it. But Brady kept his face down. Now Larsen would be looking at Brady's back, longing to look into his face. Brady kept his head down, looking at the castle shaped like a cross, a pathetic little protection with a few rocks in the desert of the busy beach.

The shadow was off his back and he felt the warmth of the sun again. Larsen was talking to his wife.

"I'll be back," he said. "I'm going to get cigarettes."

"But we have a pack," his wife said lazily.

"Never mind," Larsen said. "I'll be back, I tell you."

Brady turned onto his side. He saw Larsen striding through the crowd towards the boardwalk and the cafes. Brady followed him, without pretense. Larsen knew. Larsen might even know it was Brady. He turned around when he reached the boardwalk, and he saw Brady face to face. He began to run.

The crowds were thick here, and a running man was noticeable. Larsen turned into a carnival mirror room. Brady was only a few yards behind him. He saw Larsen look over his shoulder, and then he caught the reflection of him in a distorting mirror. Larsen ten feet high, thin as a rail, bent and abnormal. His body weaved and twisted in the mirror, and Brady thought back to all the days and nights he had pictured Larsen, seeing him in delirium, a misshapen monster. Then Larsen moved, and Brady saw him suddenly abbreviated in another mirror, squat like a toad and as broad as he was tall. Brady laughed. Larsen had never changed so rapidly, from one nightmare profile to another, even in his sweat-stained dreams. Brady laughed, and even though all the people were laughing at their reflections, they looked strangely at Brady because of his laugh.

Brady watched Larsen as he looked for another exit. There was none, and Brady stood still while Larsen had to come towards him again and pass six feet from him and onto the boardwalk. Larsen turned right. He wasn't running any more. Brady followed. He was enjoying himself.

The crowds were swarming around the soft drink stands and the hamburger heavens. They were milling about without purpose, driven by a series of whims. Among

them the two men with this great determination between them, stood out as if spot-lighted. Brady saw a cop standing at the end of the boardwalk. Larsen might go to him for help. But what could Larsen say? Would he say: "Lissen! I want protection. This guy knows I ratted on my pals. But that was a long time ago, in Tunisia. This guy wants to kill me for killing them. I want protection!" No, Larsen couldn't say that to the cop.

He turned into a dance hall. People tired of the sun and the beach were dreamily circling the floor, or flinging their limbs around to the hot music of a ten-piece band. It was a bad band, Brady thought. He knew what Larsen was looking for—a place with another exit and a crowd, so he could shake Brady. He couldn't see the other side of the dance hall, and there could be an exit there. But Larsen couldn't walk across the floor by himself. Brady saw him buy a ticket, walk to an enclosure, and take a bored taxi-dancer in his arms. He danced away with her. *Dances quite well,* Brady thought. *Maybe that's how he got that pretty wife. . . .*

"Is there an exit the other side, bud?" Brady asked the ticket seller.

"Nope," the man said. "You just came in, didn't you? Want to quit already? How about a ticket for a dance?"

"I got a bad leg," Brady said.

"Okay," the ticket seller said. "So have most of them, to look at them dance—"

Brady waited. The girl with Larsen didn't talk, shut her eyes and chewed steadily. Larsen danced, but his eyes never left Brady except to search the room for an exit. Brady liked to see his panic grow, liked to see the sudden realization in Larsen's mind that Brady had all the time in the world. . . .

LARSEN had danced around the floor, and suddenly left the girl. She looked up, surprised, then shrugged her pretty shoulders and returned to the pen. Larsen shouldered his way through the thickest part of the crowd, keeping away from Brady. It amused Brady to see he was getting rough; the panic was pushing him. He was close enough now for Brady to see the sweat on his face—and Larsen was too good a dancer for the exercise to make him perspire.

Outside, they were at the end of the boardwalk. The sand began there, and Larsen went into it with long strides. He looked back, and must have seen Brady was limping badly. But there was nowhere for him to run. At any time Brady could have shouted, "Stop that man!" and had him held for a thief. Larsen looked to the sea. Three hundred yards away across the water, there was a peninsula of land. By land, it would take better than forty minutes to run to that peninsula. If a man could gain it, it led to another part of the city, a busy area filled with busses and taxis and crowded streets. Brady watched Larsen make up his mind. He walked rapidly over the sand towards the sea.

Brady's dead eyes had a semblance of life in them. He followed Larsen through the tumbling children and picked his way around the brown sunbathers. Larsen was less careful. A man cursed him as he scattered sand. Larsen was hurrying, among people without any hurry on their minds. Brady took his time. He realized that at last he didn't mind taking his shattered body among human beings. He was even proud of his body.

The sea directly ahead of them was crowded with bathers. But they were strictly surf-paddlers, few of them venturing far out. Larsen joined them, running into the water till the small waves were above his knees, then striking out right-handed. Brady was twenty yards behind him. In his heart there was a sudden jubilation. He swam slowly, nursing his strength. He measured Larsen's speed carefully. He saw how Larsen turned his head after each stroke, trying to keep track of Brady. But Brady wanted to get the full savor of it when Larsen realized that he was a superb swimmer.

He left that supreme moment until Larsen was away from the surfbathers. Then, when he himself was clear, he began to cleave through the water towards Larsen. Once, he caught the look on Larsen's face, and that was enough. Brady buried his face in the water and stepped up his pace with an overarm crawl, feeling the water slide past him, his heart singing with achievement.

Then he was close to Larsen. He was treading water, waiting for him.

"You following me?" he said savagely.

"You know I am, Larsen."

"You got no right! Who are you, anyway?"

Brady smiled. This was the moment.

"Brady," he said.

Yes, it was worth it. His imagination had not exaggerated when he had pictured this moment, times without number. In all the settings in which he had placed the scene, it had never been as good as this. They were alone and unhampered there. There were no crowds: a good ten minutes from any interference. From the shore, they were two men treading water, talking to each other.

"Brady!" Larsen echoed. "You're a liar! Brady's dead! Brady didn't look like you! Brady's a young guy—was a young guy!"

"I'm Brady. And I'm young. They gave me a new face, Larsen. It's an old face, but I'm still young."

"You gotta prove it! You can't—Brady died in the war! They all died!"

"Except Brady, Larsen. Brady nearly died. All the others died, because of you, Larsen—"

"It's a lie! You got nothing on me!"

Suddenly, he gave up his futile pleading. He looked once at the peninsula of land, two hundred yards away, and began to swim, threshing the water. Brady laughed inwardly, and swam with him, idly keeping up with his frenzied strokes. Now he could look into the eyes of Larsen, see the terror in them, and revel in the strength of his purpose.

"You can't run out, this time, Larsen," he said.

Larsen stopped swimming, his breath already pumping out of his body, rasping.

"If you're Brady, prove it," he said.

"I've done so already, Larsen. I've built a little sand castle for your son—a castle like a cross, with some rocks. He'll never forget it. And you know I must be one of that patrol, Larsen. The patrol you killed. Does it matter which one?"

"Lissen, Brady—if you are Brady. That's my son! That's my wife! They don't know anything. They think I was a hero of the war, or something. You know how it is—"

"I know how it is, Larsen. The other twenty-one men had wives, some of them. And little boys or little girls. They are now little widows, and little orphans. They all get a pension, Larsen. Because of you."

"You wouldn't tell! I'll—I'll fix something up, give you anything you want. You won't let them know anything, Brady?"

"No," Brady said. "I won't let them know."

Larsen looked hard at him.

"Then we can fix something up? You understand? We can fix this somehow?"

"Yes," Brady said. There was something in his voice that caused the hope to die out in Larsen's eyes.

"Swim," Brady said. "That way."

Larsen was breathing hard. "I'm not so good," he said. "I can make it to shore okay, not much more—"

"Swim," Brady said quietly, "till you drown."

Larsen stopped swimming.

"You can't!" he said. "You wouldn't do that, Brady—it's murder!"

"Yes," Brady said. "It's murder. The law wouldn't kill you for murdering your buddies. I'm going to. I've intended to all this time. All these years, Larsen, while they've been giving me a new face, half a new body. But they haven't given me a new mind. It's the same as when I saw you run off and leave us to die. Swim, Larsen, till you sink."

LARSEN shot a frenzied look to the shore. He raised himself up in the water, and his mouth opened. Brady ejected himself forward, and his knee cracked Larsen in the stomach. Larsen's shout died as his body sank. He came up retching.

Larsen lay on his back in the water, his eyes bloodshot, the water slopping into his mouth.

"Brady," he said, "I'm all in. Anything you want. It's murder. Pull me in—"

"You're right, Larsen," Brady said. "This is Brady. You're all in. It's murder. But I don't want anything except to see you die. And I won't pull you in. You're going to drown, Larsen."

Larsen's eyes had despair in them. He threshed out again, this time towards the shore. Brady loafed beside him, watching him with exultation. He laughed when Larsen floundered, gave up and lay on his back in the water.

"You can hear me, Larsen?" Brady said. "Some of the boys in the patrol could have

gotten away in the jeeps, like you did. But after you skipped, none of them could. The krauts saw how we were going to do it, Larsen. None of them got away. You heard there wasn't a survivor at all, didn't you? That was good news, wasn't it? But you might call me a survivor. I had no face left, and not much body. So they gave me a new one, so I could find you, Larsen. You listening?"

"You—said—before—"

"That's so I'm certain you know, Larsen. So you know why I'm waiting for you to die."

There was a strength born of panic in the exhausted man. He reached his two hands towards Brady's neck, and his whole remaining energy was in the fingers that bit into Brady's jugular vein. Larsen's head came out of the water, and the bloodshot eyes were straining and distended, against a white and drawn face.

Brady jerked his knee up savagely into Larsen's stomach. In his mind there was a great sense of relief, a feeling that he had accomplished something. He watched Larsen crumple and sink back in the water.

"Drown!" Brady said. "Die now!"

Die? But that would be the end of the search. . . .

Tomorrow he, Brady, would have nothing to do. In a sudden flash, he had a preview of an empty world, a world without a quest. With Larsen dead, what would fill the void of his life? What else had he to seek? What was there to drive him, occupy his long waking hours and fill his dreams?

The seas were empty, and he felt lonely without Larsen. The man had escaped at last, leaving him unsatisfied, replete with an empty victory.

No! his mind said, terrified at the prospect of the vacuum before him. He could not live without the search, without Larsen!

"No!" he shouted. "I was wrong! You're going to live, Larsen! You're coming back!"

He dived under the water, praying that he would find Larsen. He gripped him, kicked to the surface, took Larsen by the hair, and began the slow swim back to the shore.

He laughed. "You're coming back, Larsen!" he shouted. "Back to your blonde wife and kid—you're going to live, a long long time! And I'll always be there, close behind you. If you get away, I'll find you! I've got—nothing else to do!"

HIS mind raced with a fantastic relief as he fought the dead weight dragging on his arm. The plan took shape.

"You're going to be a fine boy, Larsen," he muttered. "From now on. No more ratting on your pals! You're not going to be a rat to that blonde wife, that kid—I'll see to that!"

Near the shore he shouted, and saw the lifeguard leave his tower and come running for the water. Between them, Brady and the guard carried Larsen over the sand, and Brady waited while the guard worked on him until Larsen struggled back to consciousness. The blonde wife watched as Larsen's eyes opened and rolled and at last they focused on her. The girl looked up at Brady once and smiled her gratitude through the tears.

Okay, blondie, Brady was thinking. *You're going to have just about the best man there is—one more mistake, and he's had it! One false move, and I'll see it! This way, maybe we'll all escape at last. . . .*

He turned to go, and the crowd raised a little cheer, loving a hero who had brought a friend back from the dead. He walked away smoothing the hair that grew low on his brow to hide the scars. Once he stopped. He looked down at the incoming tide as it washed around a little fort built in the sand, a pathetic little fort built in the shape of a cross.

Another wave came up, and the fort was washed away.

He realised that a child was standing beside him, and he looked around to see Larsen's boy, looking at the vanishing of the sand castle.

"That's all, son!" Brady said. "What say we go get ourselves that ice cream and get really acquainted? We're going to see lots of each other from now on. A happy family, kid!"

Later he walked back to the hospital. This had been the big day when he had first dared to take his battered body among the public on the beach.

"Why, Brady!" they said at the hospital. "You look ten years younger! You look like you found the pot of gold, Brady!"

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A hiss like leaking steam escaped him as he reared to a fighting pose. . . .

NAGARA lay dozing by the brink of his favorite jungle pool. The circle made by his enormous coils was a good seven feet in diameter and he was bigger around in the middle than a man's thigh. Across a loop in the thickest portion of the body rested the flat, fierce head, armed with backward-curving teeth that were tipped like needles. The magnetic center of this entire mass—a gem-like setting for the dully polished coils—were two pale, cruel eyes with slit vertical pupils.

For eight days and eight nights Nagara had lain thus, digesting his last meal, eaten a month ago, and waiting also for another to appear. There was no hurry about either process, for all python affairs move deadly slow. Perhaps at times he slept; none could say. Sleeping or waking he looked the same—the lidless stony eyes never closed, but continued to hold their gleaming stare that filtered hate upon all the world.

Lying there in the greeny-yellow sifting of jungle light, he was a study in mottled shadow. The huge leaf-brown body was marked off with yellowish blotches that were identical with the patches of sunlight filtering through the canopy overhead—a marvel of deviltry in camouflage. So perfectly did he blend and melt into the lacy light and gloom of the midday bush that you might have stepped straight into the death ring of his coils without seeing him,

KING OF THE GREEN POOL

A Tale of The Jungle

By PAUL ANNIXTER

unless your nose had forewarned you.

That was the one warning Nagara ever gave, unwittingly, too, you may be sure. Around about him for a radius of thirty feet a musty fetor hung, badge of all those who have the unpleasant habit of bolting what they eat without chewing it. To human nostrils it would have been only a strange, hot reek, heavy and indescribable, but to all wild things it was the taint of death itself. Even that master hunter, the leopard, would have to be quite mad or well pursued indeed, to disregard that warning, nor would his strength avail, should he be rash enough to come within the eleven foot limit of Nagara's lunge. No man or beast escapes the regal python's toils, once his jaws have secured their grip, for the lap of his steel-like body about his victim is simultaneous with his strike—one swift follow-through motion—then the gradual tightening of the deadly loops of solid muscle, which pound for pound, possess more force than any other living flesh.

And so the bush in the vicinity of Nagara's pool remained scrupulously deserted. Nothing stirred in the still, stifling gloom. But Nagara continued to wait, to wait. Impatience was as unknown to him as to the hanging creepers roundabout. As for nerves, a python hasn't any. Sooner or later some misguided one would blunder into range, it mattered not when nor how.

As we have said, things move so sluggish-slow in the serpent world, there is no telling how long Nagara might have lain there, had not something overtaken him. Nothing less than a season— the subtly miraculous spring of the west African bush.

In that steamy clime where the days and the months seem all the same, there is little to herald the passing of the year. To you or me there would have been evident only a rising of the river water after the rains, perhaps a trifle headier scent of stic-lac and frangipani. But the wild things knew by a thousand tingling senses. The ground breathed up a new life, the air became filled with an invisible elixir associated with rising sap and swelling buds, a sentient field through which kind now called to kind, by wireless, as it were. The wail of the gibbons in the trees took on a different note; the languorous scent of a score of flowering vines lured clouds of great white moths each night, and the feathery fronds of new bamboo began to spring up a foot each day, rustling in the soft breezes that just faltered between rest and motion.

ON THE ninth day of Nagara's wait, spring was heralded. On the tenth it was consummated. Thus swiftly do things move below the equator. Nagara was slow to answer the feel, perhaps because there was so much of him to stir. All told he was an evil dream of some twenty-five feet, all of it slow moving and horribly well conditioned.

Above all other jungle things the great snakes of the river bush began to be sentient to the new influx of life. On the tenth day strange activities began to be manifest among the gliding folk. Strange sounds were heard up and down the mud flats and through the environing thickets. Distant evil rustlings, sudden threshings in the fern brake, and ever and anon through the still, heat-charged air the penetrant dry note of the constrictors' call came to Nagara where he lay—a prolonged venomous hissing, followed by three sharp clacks, like the locust's whir increased a thousand fold. How these sounds differed from the great snakes' hunting call none but the wild things knew, but differ they did. They advertised to the lesser dwellers of the bush that the python kind were engaged in love for the present, not hunting, and that the going was safe. And all the hunted ilks took heed, for except during these few brief weeks of the mating time, there was not one hour out of the twenty-four nor one minute out of that hour, in which the smaller things of the jungle felt free from deadly peril.

Nagara began to be conscious of other calls than that of the appetite. He began to be filled with a great unrest, an amazing inward activity. Still he gave no sign, made no move. Another half day passed before he quite made up his mind.

Dusk of the eleventh night saw him getting under way. That was a night of intoxicating sweetness. The smell of the young new growths was like a wine in the ambient air, and the whole of the Lower Kingdom which lives close to the ground, and of which Nagara was king, was flooded with a soft madness, a symphony too grave for any human ear to catch, attuned to

growing things—a blending of sound, sense, color and smell in one, in which all things became lost in a wild abandon for a day or a week, and finally came out of it again as if it had been a dream.

Nagara was slow to move, as if loath to break his trance. For some minutes there was an impression as of a cask overflowing with some treakly substance, as he began to flow out of the pile of himself. First his head and neck looped gently to the ground and disappeared in the fern brake. His tremendous middle portions followed, and finally after five or six minutes the whole of him was sucked into the green smother and disappeared. Watching it, you would have sworn there was a good hundred feet of him, which accounts for the many wild tales brought back by nimrods who neglected to pack a tape measure with them.

Emerging onto a well traveled game trail, Nagara flowed regally toward the river. He feared nothing that might come along that trail, for he was acknowledged master of all the river bush. In all the jungle he had but one real enemy—the most negligible of all from other animal standpoints. Nagara lived in morbid fear of ants. If he had a single vision that troubled his dreams it was that the carnivorous driver ants of the jungle, whose name is legion, would one day come upon him in the midst of a deep feeding dream, and write the terrible finis to his life-flow all pythons fear. . . .

All life in the vicinity of the jungle pool became suspended as word of the master's coming ran along the jungle runways. After a few hundred yards Nagara began really to unlimber, and became decidedly no sight for a drinking man. His legless gait was never fast, but it gave the impression of amazing speed. He didn't weave from side to side, as might be supposed. He flowed like a living river, without effort and in the straightest of straight lines. The horror lay in the fact that while one portion of him advanced, another stood still, so that there seemed to be several of him coming at once. Black magic of peristaltics, unknown elsewhere in the organic world.

An unwary reed buck coming up from the water, failed to sense him, and leapt away with a snort of terror a bare two feet ahead of the blunt-nosed head. But Nagara gave no sign beyond a cat-like hiss. Hunger was forgotten now.

A pair of wild pigs broke from the thicket, spied a portion of his disappearing tail and fell upon it under the illusion that it was the whole snake. No live wire could have exhibited more abrupt variety than did Nagara. The green gloom was filled with a fearful hissing, and quick devastation was visited upon that portion of the bush under the lashing of twenty-five feet of coiled might. The brush was broken down and the ground gave back the echo of thudding blows. Where the two pigs had stood nothing remained; they had been whipped from sight into the oblivion of the fern thickets and were seen no more.

Nagara flowed on. He came to the river bank at last, and thence moved unerringly down to the shimmering mud flats of the lower bend. Arriving there, his favorite spring basking place for untold seasons, he found himself a good two days late. No less than a dozen of his kind had foregathered there, of all sizes and degrees of development. On a sandy bar that ran out into the shallow water, in a still heat of some 120 F. a strange ceremony was taking place among the gliding folk.

NAGARA quickly made up for his tardiness by his unconscionable size. Two young males, mere nineteen footers, hastened to make room for him in the conclave. Then all settled once more into death-like immobility, stretched full length on the superheated sand. The moon swung along its upward arc, the whole night passed and then another day, and still no movement was manifest. Apparently all slept or were stupefied, but such was not the case. Untold stores of solar energy were being soaked up by the great bodies, in the new spring currents released from the earth. What manner of communion passed between them heaven alone could say, for the flat stony eyes gave no sign, simply stared fixedly with the expression of cold malevolence that is all that serpents show. But underneath, in the depths below the depths of sub-awareness, weighty matters were being decided. The unknowable process of pairing was going on—the great females were making their choice of the season's mate, by what means of elimination none can say. For here as in dim ante-

diluvian times, when the female of the species ruled, it was the females who dictated, who gave sanction.

Came now a few days of sudden intense heat, such as often follow a tropic spring. They marked a cessation of activity among all other jungle things, but in the serpent colony it was the tide of highest life. The jungle became a vast, still hothouse. At intervals at midday a faint and far-off *zoom* would sound through the silence, like a distant fault in the air, as the heat took hold of the sweltering land.

One noon, at some unguessed signal, the conclave on the river flats suddenly broke up. All thirteen of the leviathans took sudden life, and flowed together in a great pyramidal mass whose gleaming Medusa-like folds rose several feet in air. Out of this labyrinth they began departing, two by two, as the day wore on, striking away into the jungle, a female followed by the male of her choice.

Nagara departed early on the trail of a lithe, green-tinted female, and the pair slid soundlessly away from the colony to enter the mazes of the betrothal ceremony. Nagara's mate had been coveted by no less than five other suitors of dignified age and experience, but Nagara had won over all. During the first few hours of that nuptial flight neither of the pair could quite contain themselves. Their mighty stores of contractile energy, ever most amazing, were at their height, every inch of their great bodies spoiling with vitality. Without seeming effort they would glide up the trunks of leaning trees, and down again, the female always leading. It was a chase, a dance, an abandon of the body to the earth forces in an ecstasy of synchronic motion unequaled elsewhere in nature.

A game was evolved between the two as the day wore on. They would hang from the tree limbs mouths agape as if in laughter, stiffening their glistening bodies outward in defiance of gravitation, swinging to and fro, caressing one another with the flame-like play of forked tongues. Then the female would loop to the ground again and the chase would go on. Untold miles were covered, through arboreal lanes where nesting birds and drowsing monkeys would fly screaming or chattering in terror before them. But never did they stop to kill.

Finally a call came to the young female, an instinct that told her good hunting and safe lairing lay just beyond. And the moonlight of that night found the pair in the mazes of the nuptial dance, a dance of love, of passion and earth gladness, the like of which few eyes have ever seen. In an open glade two gleaming lengths upon which the moon shone in jewel-like glints, heads upreared, man high, red tongues licking, they swayed together and circled one another, and the moon made their gemmed eyes glow like rubies of pigeon-blood, then like opals, then like glow-worms in the dark. Then they sank to a lower range of color and finally after an hour or more to rest. A nightmare—and yet one encompassing a terrible beauty.

It was not till the following day that the mated pair went forth to hunt. Sudden hunger had assailed them, grown to an inordinate gnawing that would not let them rest. Through the wet green depths of the jungle two great forms raced with silent speed, questing. A game trail wound through the angled ferns. They followed it, and about noon made their kills at a drinking pool. A green monkey fell to Nagara's agile mate. An hour later the king himself struck down the first of a band of gibbons coming down to drink. A screech, a crunching sound in the stillness, then the heat and the silence held sway once more in the noonday bush.

They slept. Each in a separate covert, they sank into the deep narcotic stupor of the python kind. But to Nagara the rest of this day was far from pleasant. Evil visionings filled his restless dreams.

A MILE down the river from the scene of Nagara's mating was the camp of Brinkmann, the Dutch naturalist. On a grassy knoll overlooking the tea-green stream, his weather-beaten tent had stood for ten days, while the big Hollander and his eight native carriers had made short exploring trips into the surrounding bush. Brinkmann was animal man for the Hamburg and London Zoological Gardens, one of the most widely known hunters in all Europe. Just now he was out on a strange mission, such as only a few men in the history of animal catching have ever successfully attempted. After a fortunate year afield in which he had collected everything from howler monkeys, to veldt lions and two-ton hippos from the Zambezi, he had

set for himself the final task of bringing in alive and unharmed one of the huge pythons of the river bush, the largest to be found, work which had already entailed weeks of crafty study amid unmitigated danger, and which if successfully carried out would elicit only an added murmur or two from the dull-eyed sight-seers at the London zoo.

Brinkmann, it happened, had come upon the trail of Nagara shortly after he left the jungle pool, and had followed it, amazed at its uncommon size. Later, through a telescope, he had spied upon the serpent colony on the mudflats, and finally with the aid of his skilled bush trackers, followed Nagara to his tryst. Immediately he had set for himself the task of capturing the bush lord himself; none other would do. Remained the wearisome task of waiting till the king had fed and finally slept

Finally word came from his scouts that Nagara had made his kill at last. That day camp was struck, and the party of nine, armed with great nets, ropes and poles, set out on the tortuous trail into the jungle depths. In the flat primitive faces of the carriers fear and awe were lurking, remnant of a time not so far past when their ancestors had made human sacrifice to these great serpents of the river banks.

. . . Nagara stirred in his sleep. A slow oscillation ran along his length. Perhaps in his dreams he was seeing again that terrible red column of the driver ants, the scourge of the jungle, advancing upon him as he lay. But this that crept silently up to his covert was no column of ants, but of men. They came with utmost stealth, inching their way through the smother of green, pausing for their very lives' sake to peer.

To Nagara's dim, half-waking senses it seemed that the green and tenuous network of the forest tendrils hanging roundabout, had fallen suddenly upon him, as a net of cunningly woven silk dropped over him, enmeshing his mighty coils. A low subterranean hiss, like leaking steam, escaped him as he strove to rear to fighting poise. But a slip-knot tightened about his middle, imprisoning the first four yards of his might before he roused himself to sluggish life. Cold fury swept him, and a deathly fear, as he strained drunkenly against the unyielding strands. Open-eyed and fully aware of all that was taking place, he fought against stupor to bring his muscles into play—his deadly tail that could sweep these puny creatures into space. But other men with ropes and poles had already slipped nooses about him from the rear. In half an hour, a great writhing bundle of leashed might, nine feet long, looped round and round with hempen strands, and lashed to a pole, he was being carried down to the river.

Thereafter he slept again, the deathly sleep of gravity, stronger even than fear.

Night found him in the camp of the naturalist, ten miles down the river. The nets had been removed from him, and he lay in a long crate of strong green jungle wood. On the morrow he was to be taken down river to the coast port, en route to far off Europe. The terrible monarch of the river bush had become as a worm through the wiles of these pygmies.

But the brooding gods of jungle affairs had other things in store for the mottled king of the pythons. For it was that night, just before the green and mystic dawn appeared, that Nagara's dream came true. Alive and flowing, slow-winding and inexorable, a fiery ribbon came writhing through the bush—the cannibal driver ants, myriads strong, covering four hundred yards, moving at a changeless rate of a mile an hour flat. Nothing deterred them—nothing could but a wall of fire. Passing the camp on the river bank, the column turned. One supposes they must have smelled. At any rate they streamed unerringly to Nagara's crated prison and flowed like water through the bars.

Nagara awoke to the fiery torment of some twenty thousand huge-jawed insects nipping him simultaneously. Nothing but a jolt of electricity could have stirred him more effectually. He reared and hissed in horror and the musky reek from his gaping jaws filled the night air. Like lapping flames the horde flowed over him, more and ever more, in overwhelming waves. Had they found him a day or even a half day sooner, a trifle deeper in his trance, they would have consumed him alive. But a gibbon is not hearty fare for a python, and Nagara's stupor was already on the wane. This night the ancient enemy was cast to play the role of champion.

Nagara's prison house was seen to stir. It moved as if of its own accord, and then it bulged. Between the slats the dying

(Continued on page 113)

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Tub had moved to the skiff and was overseeing operations....

By WARD TANZER

THE TUB AND THE TORTOISE

TEN years ago, the sight of five hundred cases of French champagne would have been common enough on the Consolidated Lines' loading platform in Sydney harbor. In those day, Marseilles wine exporters trans-shipped through the Australian port to points in French Oceania, and Consolidated freighters—such as the 9,000-ton *Tropica* on which the silent little man at my side and I had passenger reservations—dropped off plenty on their Noumea-New Caledonia-Tahiti run.

But this was the present. French exports had failed to recover completely—especially wine exports.

"Didn't know there were five hundred dozen Mumm's left south of the equator," I hazarded to the man beside me as the *Tropica's* loading boom lowered over the cases.

He said nothing, merely shifted his weight from one elbow to the other on the passengers' rail. Through tortoise shell spectacles he stared dreamily at the champagne soaring skyward on its dollies . . . plummeting into the gloom of the hatch. Something about the sight seemed to throw a strange boyish expression over his middle-aged features.

When the last lot of wine was aboard and the "cast off" order had sounded, he turned suddenly, stuck out his hand and said: "My name's Harry McNiel. What's yours?"

A Story of Rum, Champagne—and the Sea

I gave it. His blue eyes flickered momentarily.

"We've handled some of those baulky marine motors you manufacture."

I smiled dutifully. "Are you Favors & McNiel?" I asked. F & M is an exporting partnership that makes so much money each year on San Francisco-Sydney trading operations it hurts.

He nodded. "I'm the Australian end. You know Tubby Favors in San Francisco?"

"By reputation," I answered, fighting back the smile that spreads on bay folks' faces whenever the sentimental old elephant's name comes up. "Favors paying back in favor," I added as further identification.

McNiel swallowed, and I'd swear to God tears welled up in his eyes. He turned back to the rail, his thin shoulders sinking into the crisp folds of his expensive gray suit. I wondered if I'd put my foot into something.

Pointing to the deck crew now battening down the covers of the champagne hatch, Harry McNiel said, "The Tub and a woman and I are slinging a party for the Honu islanders with that wine."

I guess my jaw fell. Even in the South Seas—where entertaining has a way of taking on unheard of forms—even there such a party was unimaginable. Harry McNiel's thin lips twisted into a fleeting half-grin. "How about dropping down to my cabin for a drink in ten minutes?" He suddenly seemed full of something.

He left me still wondering if I'd heard right. A coral-reefed atoll northeast of Tahiti, Honu is peopled with a few hundred half-civilized kanakas who wouldn't know champagne from needled soda pop, I'm sure. Since the price of tortoise shell fell following the decline of the spectacle fad in the States in 1925, Honu (meaning tortoise—the place crawls with big ones) has lapsed into obscurity.

Sydney harbor was falling astern as I made my way to McNiel's cabin. He had beer ready. "I don't drink anything harder," he explained. "O. K.?"

We had one, two, three.

Finally he asked, "D'you ever get sentimental about the business you built?"

I said yes. They tell me that artists confess affection for early works that mark the beginning of careers. Why we creatures of commerce can't cradle memories of business babyhoods, I don't know. I said so.

"You'll do," said Harry McNiel.

Ten minutes later he was into his story, his words tumbling out as though they'd been waiting years for release.

There was nothing in his birth and early childhood, McNiel said, to predict the three nightmare years which, in a way, the champagne was to commemorate—years aboard a rotten hulk of a schooner twisting around coral reefs in the dangerous Archipelago.

"I was born," he said, "in Tahiti of an American missionary couple who were set on sending me and my sister, Charlotte, to some school in the States, as soon as they could get the wherewithal together.

"Before anything was arranged—when I was fourteen and my sis nineteen—influenza took the matter in hand. During the epidemic the two of us saw our folk's bodies carted away to be burned in one of the pyres that claimed a third of Tahiti's population.

"Following this, things got tough—missionaries don't leave much money."

HE AND his sister, he said, were finally taken in by some Tahitian converts in the town of Papeete. Within a month's time he was eating with his fingers, native fashion, hell-catting around at night, using the native lingo to the exclusion of English and French.

How distressing such goings-on were to Charlotte can be guessed by the drastic step she took a few weeks later. She married to make a home for her brother; exchanged vows with a newcomer ten years older than herself who had left the States to direct his uncle's trading house in Papeete, without management since the flu plague.

Harry McNiel knew little about the big stranger—he was enormously heavy—other than that the man had been running salmon between Seattle and San Francisco. And that he drank little, an attribute which, in Papeete bridegrooms, is often rarer than physical beauty. Also, the huge stranger was kind, jolly, white. Already he'd showed an extraordinarily canny business head. And he worshipped the great-eyed beauty that was Harry's sister.

The lad remembered biting back tears at the ceremony, vowing someday to make it up to his gallant sis.

They took a charming *niau*-thatched villa, the three of them, on the palm-bordered beach at Faaa, close enough to Papeete for the husband, far enough out for Harry to swim, spear fish, and hunt wild goats.

"Am I going too fast?" Harry McNiel asked.

I said, "No, but where do the three years on the schooner come in?"

McNiel drew a deep breath as if to fortify himself against some approaching unpleasantry.

The first year, he said, was pretty close to heaven there in the *niau* villa. His brother-in-law was swell. The two of them sailed together, discussed the U. S. magazines that the man received regularly, and Harry got a pony. What was more, the growing Harry saw his sister transformed from a frantic girl into a contented woman deeply in love. On Harry's sixteenth birthday a son was born. The brother-in-law stood drinks for the town of Papeete.

"It seemed inconceivable at the time," murmured Harry McNiel, "that Charlotte would be leaving with the baby in a year. Things happen fast in Tahiti, though, once they get started.

He glossed over the details of the trouble, finished quoting a shrewd old trader in Papeete who had predicted a year before: "This Tubby Favors"—that was the brother-in-law's name—"is too damn likeable and big-hearted to keep from goin' under in Tahiti. Give him a year and he'll be guzzlin' worse than a Kanaka."

With the vision of years, the old man had foreseen the dozens flocking around the genial Tub's office each day insisting on buying—or being bought—an 11 o'clock rum. Two, three, more before lunch. At first, spirits over business deals that wouldn't jell without them. Later, liquor all afternoon anyway. More and more hours away from the office. It was the old story written again: "The less they drink above the equator, the more they take aboard below."

Had it not been for the brilliant trading tactics employed by the Tub in his earlier sober days, his firm would have been bankrupt by the end of the second year. As it was, the creditors, headed by a German named Hermann Stoodt, were complaining.

Conditions at home, as was to be expected, grew sorry. The Tub's habit of breaking promises horrified his wife. He should have known her type wouldn't take it indefinitely.

One day there arrived the letter from Consolidated Lines' San Francisco office addressed to Charlotte. With wonderment, Harry read that Consolidated fancied Mrs. Favors' suggestion of establishing a Tahiti-Tourist bureau in the States. When would she arrive to take over? They named a livable salary.

"He'd go on forever, if I didn't jerk him to his senses," Charlotte had cried on Harry's shoulder on sailing day. "I love him too much to stay. You understand?" She grasped his arm. "Help him, Bub. You're almost a man now. Maybe, between the two of us. . . ."

Harry promised. And Charlotte fled into her cabin with her year-old son.

"YOU'VE likely suspected by now," Harry McNiel smiled, "what a serious-minded cuss I was in those days. Maybe being orphaned had a bit to do with it. Anyway, I was sick about the split-up, made up my mind I'd pull along with the Tub for a while—try to straighten him up.

"I didn't know him so well in those days. . . ."

Two weeks after Charlotte sailed, January, 1920, the boom fell on the Favors Trading Co. Naturally, that did little to lessen the blow. Certainly only a man reeling under the twin disgraces of losing his family and his business would have answered the call the following day to Hermann Stoodt's office. The German said he had a deal to make the Tub.

Tahiti didn't like Herr Stoodt's deals, as a rule.

"Come along, boy," the Tub had mumbled to Harry that morning. The fat man bit his lip. "We're partners, y'know."

They must have made a strange picture in the office. In one corner sat the Tub, his bamboo cigarette holder drooping, his mammoth bulk dripping sweat in its linens. His eyes stared ahead like blank, brown marbles; his mouth twitched for the morning rum he'd been a week without.

By the window slumped Harry, his red hair on end, his mouth set in a grim line of youthful suspicion. He'd heard stories about Herr Stoodt's propositions.

Besind the broad-topped desk jutted the prognathous face of the German trader-chemist. With typical Teutonic foresight Herr Stoodt often found means of employing one vocation to further the other. Certainly the man had made both fields pay in Tahiti.

He approached the problem at hand with stinging delicacy.

"In your present financial—and physical condition—" he hissed his s's—"you'd welcome a chance to return to the sea, Favors, yes? A trawler captain you were, I believe, in America?"

The Tub asked wearily, "What've you got?"

"This." The German slid a contract across the smooth desk top. It was the sort of agreement. Harry was to realize later, that only a sentimental man with things on his mind would have touched. Herr Stoodt, reader of men's characters, had timed his contract with precision. He now said the right thing: "That contract will bring Mrs. Favors back."

The Tub closed his eyes. Harry squirmed.

"In three years," Herr Stoodt continued, "my schooner will be yours. Easy installments. With it you can start building another trading business of your own."

"What's it say, Tub?" asked Harry.

The fat one was a thousand miles away. He answered mechanically, "Half the trading profits for skippering his schooner to the Archipelago. We pay a thousand francs a month on the boat for three years." With effort, he focused his near-sighted eyes on the contract. "In case the cargo's lost or damaged, we're liable . . . eh?" He glanced at Herr Stoodt.

The German nodded. "A small risk to take for one's family's sake."

"That ain't fair," Harry burst out. "None of the skippers hauling for you used to stand loss, Tub!"

"Suppose I can't make it good?" the Tub asked, ignoring Harry. His eyes shot longingly through the stuffy office's windows to the cool papeete lagoon.

"I take it out in your services," the German answered softly.

Snapped Harry, "At what salary?"

"To be determined later." A trace of uneasiness crept into the German's tiny blue eyes. He scanned the Tub's streaming face. "The salary," he stated peremptorily, "will be fair."

Something in his eyes made Harry shout, "Fair, hell! They'll be deck-hand wages."

"Is it a custom for American young," Herr Stoodt shot out, "to interrupt their elders' talk?" He turned back to the Tub. "Who else in town would give you . . . *you* . . . a better deal?"

The Tub slumped forward like a man struck. With a shaking hand he scratched his name to the contract. He said, lumbering to the door, "You're too young to sign, boy."

"It's a damn gamble," Harry cried when they reached the street.

"Only thing I like about it," mumbled the Tub miserably, turning into the Tahiti Café for the one beer he now rationed himself per day. "'N lay off that hell-and-damn talk, boy," he added humbly. "What would your sister say?"

GAMBLE the two of them did during 1919 and 1920. Harry apprehensively, hoping somehow to make good his promise to a deserving sister. For two tremulous years the two bucked the tricky waters between Tahiti and the Dangerous Archipelago in the auxiliary schooner *Tiare*, a loggy 90-footer worth about half the number of installments Stoodt had demanded for her. They gambled cargoes on the dry rot in her after planking, during two years of hurricane-season storms through which the Tub somehow coaxed the groaning old girl. They gambled on the ascending weights of cargo that Herr Stoodt demanded more and more on outward trips; on the higher mountains of raw goods he exacted on her return. In time, the overloading of the *Tiare* became a topic along the Papeete quay. Favors' luck would break some night off a Tuamotu island reef in a *toerau* wind. The schooner would waddle up on the coral and be splinters, two days later.

"Why'n't you kick to Stoodt?" Harry had asked the Tub once in desperation, when the *Tiare's* water line was riding dangerously far beneath the water's surface.

The fat man had replied, "It's his boat."

"Who's got to make the cargo good, though?" Harry had lashed out. "Us, that's who? And how? Working it out for Stoodt at slaves' wages."

"Quit squawkin'," the Tub had snorted. "Contract's signed, isn't it?"

There was another worry burning its way into Harry's consciousness those foreboding days. Worry that Herr Stoodt would go to even greater extremes than overloading the *Tiare,* in the hope of jockeying the Tub into a hole out of which only Herr Stoodt could help him.

The Tub was making the German too much money.

Too often, under the circumstances, the fat man was showing his uncanny trading colors. As automatically as a setter scenting covey, the fat man sniffed deals. There was the trip on which he swapped copra for pearl shell on a hunch and tripled the take for the German when the *Tiare* returned to Papeete. He smelled the 1921 vanilla slump and side-stepped Herr Stoodt into the black carrying phosphate from Magatea Island. When copra prices soared later in the year, the Tub already had deposited a three month's inventory in the German's Papeete warehouse.

"How come you knew it was going up?" Harry had asked, half admiringly, half disapprovingly.

The Tub had rolled his button of a nose. "U. S. magazines," he answered quietly. Two of the four he read regularly, Harry discovered, had featured articles lately on the sheen that coconut oil could achieve in women's hair.

"Stoodt's going to like it less and less you getting the *Tiare* clear and setting yourself up in a rival business," Harry had warned.

The Tub commanded, "Stop fussin'."

Harry said no more. Each time they landed in Papeete another well-meaning trader said it for him: "You're getting too smart for your own good, Tub."

The Tub laughed, always.

"Anyway," Harry had once made the mistake of saying, "Charlotte will come back, Tub, even if we have to drudge for Stoodt . . . long as you've stuck to one beer a day, the way you're doing. That's all—"

"Except I don't ask her," the Tub had snapped. "Not till the *Tiare's* ours. Not till I get a business going do I write her. Quit talkin' about it."

Like a dream born in fever, this thought lived with Harry as the months plodded by. As their equity in the *Tiare* increased. As the loads grew heavier, if anything, and the schooner more difficult to handle. Some nights when a vicious *toerau* wind screamed through the *Tiare's* rotten rigging and she wallowed like an overloaded cow near to the jaws of a Tuamotu coral reef, this vision would spring forth before his eyes in the harsh outlines of near reality. While a white-faced Tub at the helm wheedled gale and bucked current, Harry at the sheets more than once found himself praying—frantic supplications phrased in the old Sunday-school speech of his childhood.

There was one night he fell on his knees. Caught in the tail-end of a twister off the ugly mouth of Magatea Pass, the Tub's skill failed for a time in the face of the odds. The sloppy *Tiare* neared, finally nudged the serried edge of the coral itself. There was a rasping sound as the port bilge keel scraped. The cargo shifted and groaned.

Harry never knew, in that long moment of screeching wind and roaring white water, how the *Tiare* pulled herself about into the zig-zag tack that shot her past the northern shoulder of the pass into the quieter waters of the lagoon. Luck or providence, that. Without it, cargo, ship, dreams would have been chewed to bits within a few hours by the teeth of the coral.

Herr Stoodt had smiled there on the Papeete quay when he heard about the Magatea shave.

He said a strange thing.

"Good thing you were full of rum, Favors," he called hoarsely to the Tub on the moored *Tiare*—loudly enough for the boat's crew as well as several quay loungers to hear. "You'd never have made it sober."

There was a tense moment of silence. Someone coughed. Then Harry shot out resentfully from his place at the aft hawser, "He ain't had more'n a beer a day for three years and you know it."

"Quiet, boy," the Tub had murmured, but a flicker of puzzled alarm crossed his face. With Harry he followed the German's eyes to the coral cut on the *Tiare's* port planking.

"Stop worrying, boy," the Tub had said as the trader-chemist turned away. " 'N quit sayin' *ain't.*"

Harry shook his red head. He couldn't sleep that night.

IT WAS shortly after ten the following morning—four hours before scheduled loading time—that the dissension occurred aboard the moored *Tiare*. Not long after, Harry was ashore, racing toward Lovaina's Hotel. The lad's hair and eyes spat red and blue sparks in the bright Papeete sun.

At a table on the veranda, the Tub set aside his batch of newly arrived U. S. magazines, rubbed his button of a nose reflectively and sighed. As Harry bounded up the steps, the fat one pulled at his beer and asked: "Stoodt kick you off the *Tiare?*"

Harry's sails spilled wind. "How'd you know he was loading her behind our backs?"

The Tub rolled his brown eyes toward a tableful of traders on the far veranda. "The Heinie's been pouring it aboard since eight, they told me. Only they can't tell what the cargo is."

"It's cases of some sort," Harry answered. His voice rose. "Why don't he want us to know what it is? You going to let him get away with it?"

"Boat won't be mine till two more trips." The Tub's great mouth tried to crack into a reassuring smile. "What you got in your hand there, boy?"

Harry sank back in his chair, his harassment subsiding into a sort of hopeless anguish. "But he's cooking something, Tub," he argued. "You ought to try to—"

"You been readin' too many story books." The Tub's eyes squinted nearsightedly over the veranda toward the thunderheads piling over the blue hills behind Papeete. A sliver of *toerau* ruffled the pages of his magazines, bowed the red blossoms of the hibiscus bushes. From nowhere, suddenly, came rain.

"Supposing that rotten after planking starts giving tonight, Tub—" Harry's eyes were pools of fear and worry—"because Stoodt maybe loaded the cargo heavy aft on purpose?"

"What you got there in your hand?" the Tub repeated. The rain now roared on the roof.

Harry sighed and slid two folded papers across the table. "Stoodt give 'em to me when he booted me ashore."

"Gave," corrected the Tub.

"Gave."

One proved to be the ship's cargo manifest. "Canned goods for Magatea," murmured the Tub.

"What's the value?"

"Fifty thousand francs."

Harry bit his lip. "It'll take us ten years to make that good at Stoodt's wages if anything happens."

"The Heinie got you leery, boy?" The Tub managed a smile and opened the second paper, a hand-inked chart. For an instant his smile froze. He looked nervously at the sky, rubbed his button nose in uncertain circles. Taking a bite on his bamboo cigarette holder, he straightened up in his chair, folded both papers into his wallet.

"What else you got, boy?" he asked, pointing to a letter Harry held under his freckled hands.

The young man spoke hollowly: "She says she—well—she cried every night she's so happy you've straightened up—"

The Tub wiped some rain from his eyes. "What else?"

"She's ready to come back," Harry said. "Why're you waiting until you own the *Tiare*, Tub? With Stoodt acting up the way he is?"

His voice pleaded.

"Wise up, boy," the Tub answered brusquely. "Come on. I got to send a cable before we sail. Stoodt ought to have the schooner loaded by now."

On the way out, they passed the table of traders. "Just heard Stoodt bought five hundred cases of rum from E.F.O. yesterday," one of the men said. "Maybe that's what the *Tiare's* taking to Magatea."

"*Nuhn-unh.*" The Tub smiled. "He'd be afraid I'd drink it all up before we got there."

Guffaws sounded around the table. "Better sit down and get in training anyway. You're three years out of practice." The man grinned.

"No thanks," the Tub answered. He eyed the speaker searchingly. "It'll have to be a real occasion, when I skid off, Ed." Then he said abruptly, "Where'd you get those new specs?"

"The States. My wife says they're going to be all the go soon—the rims."

"Might be gettin' myself some someday," murmured the Tub softly. "S'long, boys."

Harry buttoned his pea jacket against the rush of wind and rain on the steps.

MIDNIGHT found the *Tiare* careening a course through waters fifty miles northeast of Papeete. Since sundown the growing *toerau* had kneaded the water into deeper and deeper troughs, higher crests of black water. Now the overburdened *Tiare*, groggy as a gorged sow, was taking more than she missed over the nose. She yanked nastily at her helm. Vano, the Tahitian mate, braced his bare feet against the wheel block and with one arm wiped spray and rain from his unhappy face. Now and then his eyes glanced uneasily at the piling cumulus clouds banking to the windward for more rain.

Forward in the galley, Harry hesitated between mouthfuls of stew to ask: "Get an answer to your cable, Tub?" He shot an inquiring glance toward a yellow message peeking out of the Tub's pea jacket.

"Just as we were castin' off," the fat man mumbled, bending lower over the magazine beside his stew bowl. "Did you ease the cargo off that weak after plankin'?"

"Much as I could," answered Harry, "While you were getting orders squawked at you from Stoodt before we sailed."

The schooner lurched into a swell. Both men grabbed their slopping stew dishes. Something tinkled aft.

Harry glanced nervously at the pantry where Ah Ching, ship's cook, was sharpenning his knives. "Stoodt hint at what we're loaded with?" he asked quietly.

"Canned goods, he said."

Harry's lips twisted. "The cases I shifted aft didn't handle like canned goods. Besides, they always have a brand stamped on the case. These're blank."

"Quit fussin'." The Tub frowned. He closed his magazine. "*Tiare's* floatin', isn't she?" His brown, weather-beaten fingers drummed on the mess table.

The *Tiara* staggered. Harry's disturbed eyes fastened on the spray-flecked galley porthole. "Anyway," he breathed, "we haven't got any lousy low island reefs to cross before we make Magatea. It'd be like that Hun to make us put in somewhere with this *toerau* and heavy load. . . ." A shiver passed through his narrow shoulders.

Something clinked aft again.

The Tub rolled his nose, glanced guardedly at a pigeonhole over Harry's head. Faintly visible in the flickering lamplight were the manifest and chart which Harry had brought to the hotel that morning. The fat man's bulk deflated in a sigh. "Why'n't you turn in, boy? I'm taking over from Vano at two bells." He reached for his visored cap, swiveled on his stool from the table.

Ah Ching stepped from the ship's pantry sharpening his butcher knife. "Ah Ching butcher turtle, soon as *Tiare* cross Honu Island pass," he announced. His wrinkled face spread into a good-natured toothless grin.

The Tub swore softly. His eyes dropped.

"Honu Island! Us?" Harry demanded. His mouth remained open.

The Tub spoke with the weary air of a man side-stepping an inevitability. "*Honu* means 'turtle' in kanaka," he stated in a bland, pedagogic voice. "The island swarms with big ones. Ah Ching was sayin' the natives race atop 'em. How'd you like to go for a ride?"

The Chinaman nodded: "Ah Ching in Honu long time ago. Butcher hundred turtle."

Silence hung heavy in the galley for a moment. The Tub sucked in his great cheeks unhappily, swiveled back on his stool, and picked the chart from the pigeonhole.

"Didn't want to worry you, boy," he explained. "Figured to let you sleep while we were runnin' the pass. Get there about dawn." He nodded toward the cook. "Guess the Chinee heard Herr Stoodt talkin' Honu at the quay when you were below."

The *Tiare* rolled under a big one; the galley lamp swayed, throwing crazy shadows under Harry's bulging blue eyes.

"What's he wanting us to try to put in at Honu for?" he burst out finally. "Tortoise shell ain't worth anything these days."

The Tub threw him a quick look. "Natives have got some copra that wants pickin' up," he answered. He spread out the hand-inked chart. "Keep your shirt on. Look. This new chart shows a new pass. Twice as wide as the old one. This'n is on the windward side of the island."

Harry scanned the chart for a moment, then swung his miserable eyes to the framed photograph swaying on the panel-

ing over the Tub's head. There was deep pleading in his voice. "Tub, tell Stoodt to go to hell this once, will you? For their sakes?" He motioned his head toward the likenesses of the great-eyed Charlotte and the Tub's young son.

The Tub shut his eyes.

"Stoodt doesn't want any copra," Harry pressed. "All he wants is for us to risk the *Tiare* and her cargo again. He picked Honu because it's got the stinkin'est pass to make of any island on the course to Magatea."

The Tub shook his head. "The *toerau* may quiet before we get there. Anyway, we got a new chart to navigate by."

Harry looked at the paper and cried. "It's so faded you can hardly read it."

The Tub's near-sighted eyes squinted. "Must 'a been in the sun."

"The sun ain't shone once since I handed it to you this A.M. folded up with the manifest." Harry sprang to his feet. "You know what? It's supposed to fade. It's a phony!"

"Readin' too many story books again, boy," the Tub said, forcing a smile. "Cool off. Stoodt just traced it in cheap ink, 's all. Anyway I got the bearings memorized."

"Trace hell! He made it up out of his head and put it down in some trick fading chemical." Harry's eyes rolled wildly.

"Turn in!" There was a commanding snap to the Tub's voice.

Harry started to object, took a look at the Tub's snapping eyes, made for the doorway instead.

"We still put in at Honu?" the Chinaman asked pointing above. "Bad *toerau* get worser."

The Tub brushed past Harry.

Fifteen minutes later an exhausted young Harry was tossing in his bunk. The howling northeaster and the strange periodic tinkle and clink in the cargo bothered him. He'd take a snooze and investigate.

HE AWOKE with a start—to the sound of a thousand teeth grating on planking. There was a piercing squeal of tortured timbers above. A series of rending snaps. A man screamed forward. Glass chinkled and jingled. And over the din the congealing growl of that South Sea onus—white reef water.

In the after cabin Harry rolled like a squirrel in a cage. He shot from his bunk to the starboard wall; down to the floor; over to the companionway. Hanging to the door jamb, he blinked dazedly at the washstand crashing its way horizontally over chairs into the bunk; books, shoes, seat chests ricocheted like things gone mad.

With a grinding moan the thrashing world he'd awakened into finally subsided into alarming immobility. What was left of the room's furnishings tumbled at last into a heap of wreckage in one corner and was still. For one horrible moment Harry shut eyes on the shambles lit wanly by the light of dawn. A gust of air surged down the companionway, carrying with it a strange mixture of land smell and alcohol. White water thundered.

Like a sleepwalker, Harry turned from the after cabin and picked his way forward to the galley. In a litter of shattered crockery sat Ah Ching, his toothless mouth motionlessly agape.

"*Tiare* on reef," his old voice trembled.

Harry nodded dumbly, leaned for a moment on the mess table. The photograph of Charlotte and the little Tub hung insanely askew before him on the port paneling. He passed a hand over his forehead and on a crazy impulse flipped the great eyes and chunky little face to the wall.

The ship's manifest, disengaged from the pigeonhole, now fluttered to the floor. Like a magnet, the cargo evaluation figure drew Harry's wide eyes. Written in Herr Stoodt's blunt hand, the inked figures and words shot out of the gloom: *50,000 francs, captain's responsibility.* The chart of Honu Island's new pass lay white and quite blank alongside. Harry flipped the paper over. Blank on that side, too. So he'd been reading too many story books, eh?

The skylight above him opened suddenly to admit the dripping head and shoulders of the Tub. "Give me a hand at the sweeps in a minute, will you, boy? We're goin' ashore to Honu." His voice was a strange combination of despair and excitement. In one hand he clutched a steel measuring tape. Apparently he'd been overside on the reef examining the hull.

"She stove in anywhere?" asked Harry dully.

The Tub shook his head. "Just hard

aground is all. Come on, boy, lower the shoreboat."

"Y'mean . . . we're going to get hands to pry her off?" Harry mumbled.

The Tub's great head shook. "Too heavy."

"Going to get outriggers to float her cargo ashore, then?"

"Cargo'd never reach there," the Tub answered, licking his lips.

"What d'ya mean?" Harry asked; gradually his mind was clearing. "The cases aren't hard to handle."

"Sniff the hatch on your way above." With that the Tub's emotionless face disappeared.

Something caught at Harry's throat as he set foot on deck. It was a seaman's nightmare. Crazily a-tilt, its lee rail lay half under hungry white water. The anchor forward had burst its lashing and lay, flukes awry, in a maze of uncoiled hawsers. The paint locker over the wheel house gaped, spilling cascades of red lead and black whale oil to the deck below. The planks of the forward hatch cover, tormented by the wracking strain of the grounding, had sprung from their battens, gashing scars in the mizzen boom and mast. Vano, the mate and the three kanaka deck hands were crouched by the port rail. They were sniffing.

"You the one that yelled?" Harry asked of Vano, trying to smile.

"Not scared no more," the Tahitian grinned, casting a sidelong glance at the open hatch.

Harry's eyes raced over the natives' black heads to the silhouette of Honu Island lying before the dawn a half mile away. A few spirals of early morning smoke from native fires on the far, leeward side of the island swirled up and were caught in the breeze; the *toerau* was dying hard, meaning another blow by nightfall. Harry's eyes turned from the palm-girded island back to Honu's circular barrier reef on which was lodged the *Tiare*. Harry followed it first northward, then to the south. It was unending, an impassable barrier.

He heard the Tub's wet canvas shoes squashing up behind him.

"This where the chart said the pass was?" he asked the fat man quietly.

The Tub nodded, made a faint motion to throw an arm over spindly shoulders, decided on a cigarette instead. He twisted the cigarette into his bamboo holder. "Didn't find there wasn't any pass till it was too late to heave to in the *toerau*." He shrugged his great shoulders. "Still might have pulled her out of it with the auxiliary if my peepers weren't so near-sighted." His eyes wandered to the open hatch.

Harry's mouth hardened. "Stoodt's phony chart is all faded this morning."

Tiny lines appeared around the Tub's tired eyes. Just like in a story book, eh, boy?"

"I'm going to save that chart paper for evidence anyway."

"Don't be stupid." The Tub started toward the hatch. "Stoodt's story, an' it'll hold in any court of law, will be that I discovered what the cargo was and got plastered. Nobody but a guy fresh off the wagon would pile up on the wrong side of an island. Take a smell."

HARRY leaned over the open hatch cover. The rows of cases below had burst their battens. A few cases had cracked open; in these glittered bottles, some unbroken, some dripping brown liquid from their shattered sides. The fumes staggered Harry.

"Liquor," he gasped.

"Rum," said the Tub. "Forward hatch is full, too. Vano and the crew're already takin' a bath in it."

One look at the natives flat on their backs hilariously tackling the liquor with animal abandon sent Harry aft again. He glanced worriedly toward the shore. "We'll get ganged for some of this," he said, "if those kanakas ashore find out what's in the hatch."

" 'S why we can't ferry it," the Tub said. "Figured it might be more sociable to give it away than have it took. Come on, boy, we're slingin' a party. To make Stoodt's story really stand on its feet!"

"We're what?" asked Harry aghast.

"Receiving the folks of Honu Island—with rum."

Harry's jaw stuck out. "Like hell we are. They'll drink it all if they come aboard. This is a partnership, remember. Half the grog's mine. I'll fight every damned kanaka that tries to get aboard," he went on, his eyes blazing. "No sir, you

don't throw away my share on a wholesale drunk—"

"I said—" the Tub's jaw muscles stood out under their beef—"we're throwin' a party. Us." He towered over the young man.

Rage seized Harry. "Ya cheap souse," he lashed out. "Just because things go wrong you turn yellow and slide off the wagon. You throw away the cargo—*my* cargo—you throw away my sis—your own kid—for a lousy brawl!"

The Tub shuddered, took a step forward—silent.

In the breathless quiet that followed, Harry felt his wrath drain suddenly into a hopeless despair. He closed his eyes, got limply to his feet, made his way for the shoreboat. "O.K., skipper," he mumbled.

The Tub smiled. "Be right with you," he said huskily. "Gotta see Ah Ching for a second."

Harry wondered what had happened to himself as ten minutes later he pulled at the skiff's sweeps. How could a guy like the Tub put up such a strong front against the threat of a crack-up for three long years, and then go so completely jelly-fish inside when it came to a head. You'd think he didn't know there was a nearly-paid-for schooner rocking back there on the reef, due to break up before another sunrise, 50,000 francs worth of cargo it would take them ten years to pay for. You'd think he didn't give a hang for all the Charlottes and little Tubs in the world.

Harry sagged on his oar.

"Have some rum, boy," the Tub suggested, resting on his sweep. He retrieved a bottle from under the thwart, handed it to Harry.

"Why not?" Harry coughed, wiped his lips, offered the bottle back to the fat man.

"Not right now," said the Tub. Something had engaged his attention around the shoulder of the circular shore. His wide mouth curled now in a thoughtful smile. "Look." He pointed. "What Ah Ching was tellin' about."

Rounding the lagoon, their brown skins glistening wetly against the blue green of the lagoon, were three natives—two men and a girl—sledding curiously under and over the water's surface atop moving knolls of brown shell. Their laughter carried boisterously in the quiet morning air.

"What're they doing?" asked Harry indifferently.

"Racin' turtles."

With the finesse of aviators who direct their craft up or down by regulating the tilt of the horizontal aft surfaces, the brown folk dived or emerged by tilting the level of the big tortoises' shells. Banking to the right or left meant simply transferring one's weight from the middle of the shell. Polynesian-like, the contestants tried for as much splash as speed.

"Figured we might stage a little tortoise race to the *Tiare* this P.M., the Tub muttered, picking up his sweep. "Soon as we hit Honu, goin' to talk to the chief."

"Why'n't you just give them the liquor and get it over with?" Harry suggested sourly. He was looking across the water back to the *Tiare*. With every surf her masts shuddered. "If she was empty, bet she'd come near floating," he murmured.

"Lot of difference between comin' near 'n comin' clear," sighed the Tub, laying to his sweep. Harry thought of the fat man's measuring tape he'd been using earlier in the morning and shrugged.

"How long—do you give her on the reef?" he asked between strokes.

The Tub's eyes rolled to the swaying coconut palms ashore. "Can't tell. Depends on how much surf the *toerau* kicks into her planking tonight."

Fifteen minutes later Harry was resting grumpily athwart the beached shoreboat. Reproachfully, he watched his brother-in-law's bulk plod up the beach toward the clump of *niau*-thatched houses that was Honu Village.

THE shoreboat was back alongside the *Tiare* by noon. Ah Ching, a dish towel around his head, another wrapping his skinny mid-riff, hung over the port rail. A butcher knife glistened in one yellow hand.

"Kanakas come here on tortoises?" he asked the Tub.

"Five gangs of about a hundred each. Quarter of an hour apart. Can y' handle 'em?"

The Chinee nodded his topside dishtowel and grinned.

"Got lines noosed?" asked the Tub.

"All ready."

"What's the gag?" Harry put in contemptuously.

"Ah Ching's got his mind set on turtle stew."

"Bilge water!" snorted Harry.

"Yessir. Come on, boy . . . we hoists your stock out of the hatches. You're playin' bartender at this party."

Sullenly Harry glanced across the half mile of lagoon to Honu's shore. Like ants jostling aphis, his customers were already rounding up their racing mounts. He mumbled, "I thought you couldn't catch turtles except after dark."

"For fun and rum," the Tub answered from the hatch, "kanakas work miracles."

Two hours later those aboard the *Tiare* were ready to receive. Certainly the hosts of no party in French Oceania have before or since looked forward to entertaining with more divergent emotions. The *Tiare's* bartender, pasty-faced, swallowing more and more rum against the tears that wanted to flow, sat dejectedly with a hammer before the rum cases piled high and wide on the after deck. One of the hatch plankings set on two boxes was to serve as a barrier-bar against the five waves of oncoming Honu islanders. On this Harry now buried his head in his arms.

Forward and below the *Tiare's* bow, joyfully sloshing around on the reef like some monstrous amphibian, was the Tub. No man, about to roll off the beer wagon, could have appeared more exhilarated over the occasion. His great clown mouth was stretched in a smile. His near-sighted eyes glittered like brown diamonds in the midday sun.

"They comin' yet?" he bawled up to the yellow Ah Ching who, like some fantastic Oriental figurehead, straddled the *Tiare's* bow-sprit overhead, a butcher knife in each hand.

"By 'm by," the Chinese answered, peering across the lagoon. He glanced below at the Tub on the reef. "Don't lose lines," he called down.

The fat man shifted a score of ten-foot nooses that hung over one shoulder.

Aft, aboard, Harry rolled out a demi-lander with the fastest tortoise. The rest of the gang would receive two litres apiece. "Give 'em all we've got," the Tub had ordered.

"Here they come!" Ah Ching's frenzied voice now squeaked from the bowsprit.

"Drink 'er up . . . up . . . up!" bellowed the Tub's voice from below on the reef. Then he laughed; and it sounded like the boom of a drum over the surf's hiss.

Didn't he care? Didn't he give a damn? Harry whispered miserably to himself. *Oh, Charlotte . . .*

Now there sounded faint shouting from the lagoon. It grew, resolving into an uproar of squeals, screams, whoops of laughter. Water churned. Harry took a peek over the stacked cases, sat down.

The lagoon off the *Tiare's* prow was crawling with the bodies of a hundred-odd brown girls and men; with turtle shells . . . turtle heads . . . turtle flippers. The natives in the vanguard had slipped from their mounts' shells and were adding the propulsion of their own legs to that of the tortoises' frantic flippers. Those in the rear, still atop their shells, banked, dived, emerged for the sheer fun of it. Old and young, they yelled their approval of the white men's party.

Harry shuddered as he saw the glistening brown arm of the winner of the first race slither over the port rail. There followed a muscular shoulder; a shock of curly black hair; a brown face, its white teeth open in a yowl of delight. With a cat-like spring, the native wrapped himself around the demi-john of rum.

Then the deluge. Over the prow, the stern squirmed the scores of others. Like bees to the hive they swarmed toward Harry and his bar. Their red, green and blue *pareus* streaming water, necks garlanded with drenched frangipani leis, bodies reeking with pungent coatings of coconut oil. There was a pop of corks under the persuasion of strong white teeth. Gurgles over the sound of Harry's unwilling hammer prying case lids loose. The panting of Polynesian lungs. Howls of rapture as the first fiery gulping took hold inside of writhing brown stomachs. Joyous stomping of bare feet—enough to make the groaning *Tiare* teeter in her tracks. A fragrant tiare blossom found its way over Harry's dodging ear. A creamy-brown Diana brushed his cheeks with her lips. There were affectionate slaps on his weary back. Full bottles over the bar . . . empties over the ship's side . . . bottles . . . bottles . . .

(Continued on page 105)

Island Of Adventure

Fact

By ALEKO LILIUS

TO ME, the center, the heart of adventure lies somewhere among the verdant, steaming jungle islands of Borneo, Celebes, Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan.

Shortly before the last war, fate threw me onto the tropical shores of Jolo Island in southern Philippines. Before long, I became a friend of the reigning, if not ruling, sultan, Jamalu'l Kiram II. Although the American government had stripped him of almost all temporal powers, he was still the religious overlord of a couple of hundred thousand fanatic and sometimes unruly Mohammedan Moros.

Throughout their long history, the Moros have always been a warlike people. They were merciless pirates, feared by East India merchantmen about the turn of the last century and later, and no ship could escape their light, fast *vintas,* the fastest sailing vessel then afloat. They were still a scourge of the seas when the Americans took over and, to placate them, the United States agreed to pay the sultan the princely sum of two hundred fifty dollars a month as long

The island was a strangling wilderness—a cursed, haunted, waterless hunk of coral in the blue Pacific—with the standard equipment of a dusky darling. . . .

as he stopped piracies and kept his people quiet. The Moros were impressed by the fact that Uncle Sam paid tribute to their sultan.

The reason the sultan liked me, a foreigner and an unbeliever, was, however, that he and I often played chess together. The old boy was a veritable chess fiend and, worst of all, considered it a royal privilege to cheat. You had to watch him like a hawk.

He often "inadvertently" moved a piece with his royal arm or sleeve, and when I caught him at it I had to "inadvertently" maneuver it back onto its proper place. He considered this a strinkingly different approach to the game—to the Moros their Mohammedan pope could do no wrong. Occasionally I even won a game, and one day the sultan told me that he would like me to become a Mohammedan, acquire an island of my own, settle in Sulu for good and marry a Moro princess. He had a dozen nieces to offer.

"Did your highness say 'an island'?"

The old man nodded and suggested that I look around.

Who hasn't dreamed about owning a tropical island? I took a good look around, sailed the Sulu Archipelago for weeks. but could find no suitable piece of floating coral land. Most of them were already occupied or owned by someone. Then Achmed, my mate, cook and jack-of-all-trades, remembered an island far away in Celebes Sea, about forty miles north of Jolo and

some seventy miles south of Mindanao.

Trouble with the island was that *nobody* wanted it—it was cursed; there was no drinking water; it was covered with strangling mangroves; there was no harbor; dangerous coral reefs surrounded it and the waters around it teemed with man-eating sharks. Besides—it was haunted.

Instantly I liked everything about this hunk of jungle-covered coral. I sailed back to Jolo, looked up the proper authority and made a deal to purchase the Mamanuc island, all of its 144 hectars at ten pesos a hectar, to be paid in ten yearly installments.

To own a piece of coral land is one thing. To live on it and make it work for you is another. It is *not* romance, moonlight and guitar music on a cool, sandy beach, with a beautiful maiden in a sarong and within reach. It *is* hard work, sweat, more work, cuss words and more sweat. Also it requires a considerable outlay of capital.

I had a Chinese partner in Jolo, Shanghai Charlie. He was wealthy, owned a ketch and diving gear and I handled his pearl diving business on shares. The sultan owned several oyster banks and Charlie and I had rented the concession to work them. We had been doing well, and in Charlie's safe were two dozen of the most magnificent, rose-colored pearls which we had hoarded, waiting for a certain Singapore buyer to show up.

Surely, I thought, Charlie would lend me all the money I needed to start clearing the island and plant cocoanuts. I went to see him.

Charlie told me that I was an idiot or suffering from sun stroke. He had heard of people who wanted to quit the tropics and go elsewhere, but here was I yearning to get settled. I could no longer be trusted to look after myself, said Charlie and would not let me have a cent.

So with what little cash I had I bought a few saws, axes, hammers, nails, second hand lumber, plenty of sturdy rope, and wangled some food stuff from Charlie's *tienda* on the cuff. Achmed suggested that we hire a few Moro workmen, but no one would come when they heard we were going to Mamanuc, because it was haunted. Then Achmed suggested that we take an *imam* along to drive the evil spirits away, and when we sailed we had several workmen and an *imam* along.

As soon as we landed, the *imam* took his little prayer mat and went to work all around the island. Yet, on that first night we had an earthquake and a tidal wave that threw my ketch high up on the beach and scattered the building material we had brought along all over the island.

"See, *tuan*," said Achmed, "what the angry spirits can do to us."

THE island had no natural harbor, but we discovered a lagoon formed by a semi-circular coral reef that could be used both as a harbor and an excellent swimming pool at low water. Each high tide filled it with new cool water and when the water receded there were always plenty of fish that had been trapped. Sometimes a large shark or an octopus came visiting and they were hard to eject. But the lagoon always provided us with fresh fish, clawless lobsters and other shellfish, some of them looking unbelievably grim; yet they were mostly good eating.

After our first disastrous night ashore, Achmed and I decided to return to Jolo for more material. I was surprised to find Charlie in a different mood and before I knew it, he had provided me with a new load of lumber, corrugated iron sheets for roofs, many bags of cement, several second hand tents for the workmen, and offered to go along to take a look-see at Mamanuc. In the ketch's hold I found cases of canned food, and many sacks of rice, all a present from Charlie, and got to wondering at this sudden change of heart.

On our arrival, Charlie took a long walk around the island, and finally suggested that we should form a partnership. I told him that the island was mine, all of it, but when it came to crops—anything other than cocoanut, that was—I would talk business with him. So, when Charlie left for Jolo, he left six large sacks of castor beans to be planted as interim crop while the cocoanuts matured—since it would take eight years before I could pick the first nuts! Two weeks later, Charlie sent me a hundred Rhode Island Red pullets and two young roosters to keep me in fresh poultry meat.

He also arranged to procure the first lot of cocoanut seedlings, about 3000 of them, to be delivered by a tribe of Bajaos, the Sea Gypsies, at eight *centavos* per nut or 4

cents U.S. money. In all, we figured that it would take between 10,000 and 12,000 seedlings to cover the whole plantation, once all of the land was cleared.

Our water problem worried me considerably. What we were drinking was collected rain water, but what would we do when the dry season came? Then an old Bajao, who showed up one morning with a load of cocoanuts, pointed to the half-empty drums and asked why we had them. Did we not know that there was a perfectly good well where we could draw all the water we wanted? We thought that he was fooling, but he asked us to follow him.

He took us down to his *vinta* and paddled halfway around the island. At a spot, not more than fifty yards from shore, he pointed to the sea and asked us to taste it. It was cool, refreshing, sweet. The water was crystal clear, churned up from the sandy bottom. I gave the old man twenty pesos for showing us the place, and told him that if he ever felt like settling, he could always do it here and I would give him a few acres besides. He smilingly refused, saying he had been born on the sea and there he would live until he died.

As soon as the house was partly built, I moved into it—until then Achmed and I had been living aboard the ketch—but as we had no furniture, I slept in a hammock strung up between the walls. Soon I found that the landcrabs were a nuisance, they got everywhere and took anything they could lay their claws on. They climbed up the roof and many a night I woke up when one of them fell on my mosquito net.

Besides the crabs we were plagued by pesky little black flies that sometimes stung painfully.

I made a good map of the whole island and soon had planned the arduous work ahead.

We worked from sunup to sunset and kept no union hours. It was back-breaking labor, but then, if all went well, in eight years, I could consider myself a well-to-do cocoanut plantation owner. By then each tree would start to bear, from 60 to 80 nuts to a tree a year. Thus each tree was at least worth 5 to 10 pesos, and with about 12,000 of them working for me and my descendants for the next 50 or 60 years or even longer, the labor put into it represented a profitable investment.

IN THE meantime, something had to be done to provide our daily "rice and fish"—one doesn't speak of "bread" out in the Islands. Charlie's idea to plant castor beans was good, I thought. The plants grew and soon the bean pods were filled. Then the pods started to pop, throwing beans all over the geography, faster than we had time to pick them. There were castor bean seeds all over the place. Our chickens ate them and developed a permanent case of diarrhea. Several of them died from "internal exhaustion." It was about this time that we noticed a decline in the landcrab population, so we took it for granted that the voracious crustaceans had had their fill of those beans, and took to the sea or died away.

Then, one day, we saw several colorful sails on the horizon and found that the Sultan of Sulu was about to pay us a formal call. The old boy arrived in state with several of his women and three of his noble *datus*, chiefs. He got ashore and we had a meal such as only Achmed could conjure and then the sultan asked me what I had done about becoming a good Mohammedan. I admitted that I had been too busy clearing land and planting cocoanuts and beans, to do much about my soul.

What about marrying? He had just the girl for me. A niece of royal blood.

It took a lot of diplomacy to wiggle out of this dilemma. Fate came to my assistance. That night we were struck by a typhoon, which partly demolished my hut, and played havoc with the royal boats. This was a divine sign from Allah, I said to the Sultan, that I was not ready yet to accept the Only Faith of True Believers. The old man shook his head, but never touched on the subject again.

During the last war, the Japs took the island. I was not there when it happened. Shanghai Charlie was killed when the enemy burned and pillaged Jolo. Now my cocoanuts are bearing—only, the present Philippine government demands documentary proof that I own the island and that all payments have been made as per my original contract. And while the Japs were around I missed a few installments.

But the island is still there and so are all my cocoanuts. Perhaps some day—though I'm not praying for the miracle—I'll be back there, too. Who knows?

THE TERROR SIDE

By JOHN H. HOLLAND

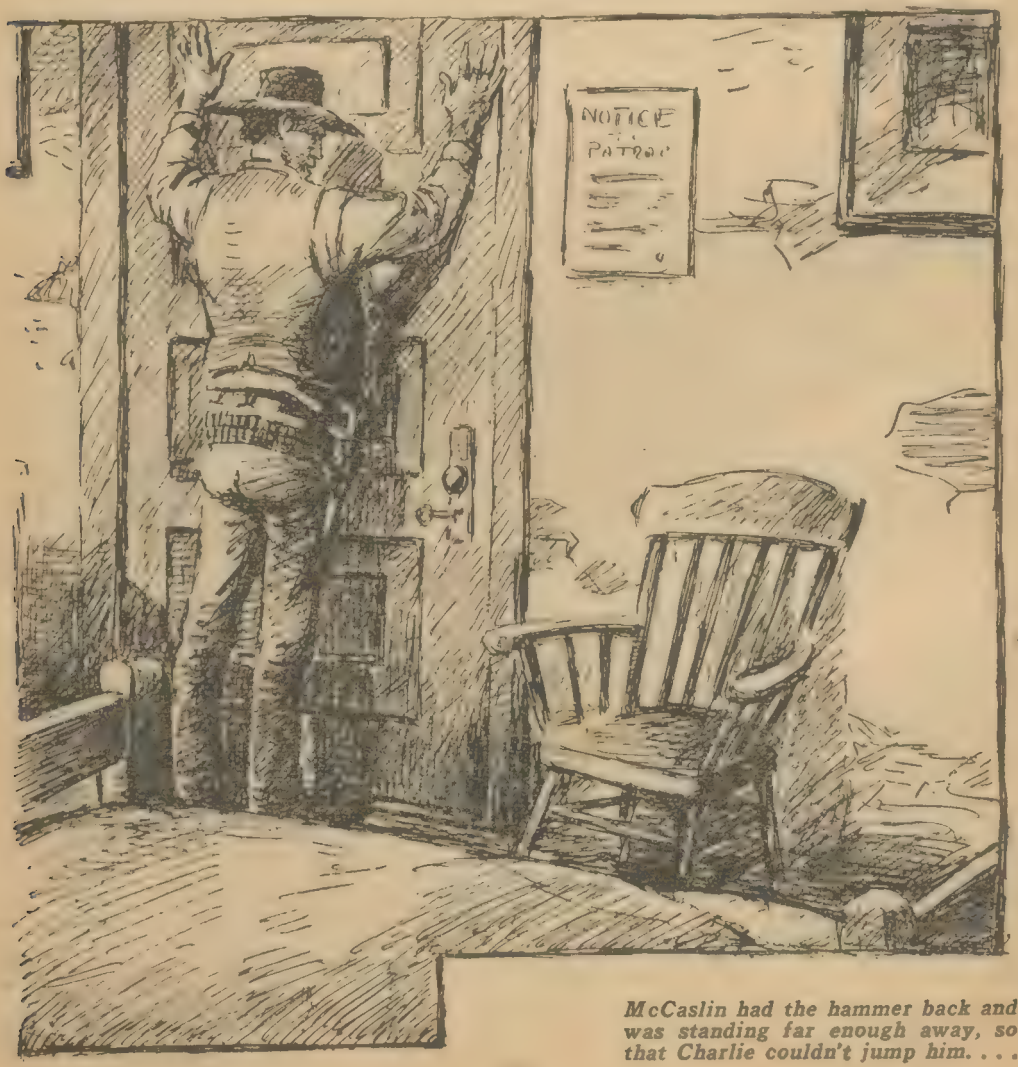
CHARLIE TENNANT stepped out of the jail office, pulled the door to behind him and locked it. Then he dropped the key into his shirt pocket with the telegram and stood on the boardwalk, his back against a post, looking downstreet toward the Overholser Hotel.

The sun had dropped like a hot orange dollar in the west and already the cool air had begun to slide down off the mountains and along the main street of Crawford. The stage had come, in the minute before, and now, in front of the hotel, people moved in a loose knot through the

OF THE STREET

weak patches of light that streamed from the windows to cut the gathering shadows of the porch. There was a clear gray color to the air like the town had been cut in steel and the gleaming red stripes on Einar Thorvaldson's barber pole had taken on a deeper color, more like blood. Charlie drew a cigar from his pocket, clipped the end, then lighted it.

A lean puncher rode a big roan down the middle of the street. He was leading a saddled black mare and when he turned in at Hogan's hitch-rail and swung down, his broad shoulders blocked Charlie's view. He wore a tall white hat that cut into the light from the nearest hotel window and, to see around him, Charlie shifted his weight to his left foot. He wanted to see



McCaslin had the hammer back and was standing far enough away, so that Charlie couldn't jump him. . . .

each of the passengers when they first stepped down from the stage.

The telegram had come from down at Dawson at four in the afternoon. It had been slipped under the jail door where Charlie had found it only a couple of minutes before when he'd first got back from Glassner's ranch. It read:

HEREWITH AUTHORITY TO ARREST GEORGE McCASLIN FOR VIOLATION OF PAROLE FROM LOUISIANA STATE PENITENTIARY IF KNOWN ARMED. McCASLIN SIX FEET TWO, MEDIUM BUILD, BROWN HAIR, BLUE EYES, ABOUT THIRTY-SEVEN, SCAR ON LEFT SIDE OF THROAT. McCASLIN WILL ARRIVE CRAWFORD SIX P.M. STAGE WEARING GRAY SUIT, BLACK HAT, BLACK BOOTS. HAS THREATENED TO KILL CRAWFORD BARBER EINAR THORVALDSON.

SIGNED, HOLT, U. S. MARSHALL

Charlie knew Holt from the two times he'd met him down at Dawson, but the rest of it wasn't anything he'd known about before. He guessed the prison governor down at Baton Rouge must have sent a telegram to Holt, but he wished he'd been able to get back in time to go across and talk to Einar. But the stage was in front of the hotel and now all Charlie could do was watch for a tall man in a gray suit. He drew heavily on his cigar.

Two women stepped from the stage down to the porch and then Charlie saw first the black hat and then the gray pants leg and black boot as a tall man stepped down. The man turned, held up a hand for a bag and, when the driver had handed it down, turned again and stood looking along the boardwalk past Hogan's at Einar's barber pole. One of the women stepped in front of him and Charlie stood away from his porch post and let his right hand drop to his .44. He shifted the holster against his leg and then soft steps came up from behind.

"I'm ready, Marshall," a boy's voice said. It was a shy voice, turning deep. A boy's voice, just now taking the first coarse sounds of manhood. Charlie took the cigar out of his mouth, still watching the black hat on the hotel porch.

He said, "Good evening, Tom."

"We can start any time you want, Marshall," the boy said.

CHARLIE stood rigid, careful to keep his face away from the boy. He was Tommy Thorvaldson, Einar's lad. For three years, now, not counting the measles, Tommy had been making the rounds with Charlie every evening and Charlie didn't doubt but Tommy thought the rounds couldn't be made without him. He had the worst case of marshall fever Charlie had ever seen in a youngster and it was going to be hard on him when he found out Charlie had just been kidding him along. He was nearing twelve and Charlie had had to be careful of his feelings lately. But if there was going to be any trouble between Einar and McCaslin, Tommy had to be got out of the way. Even if it stung his pride.

"Is your pa in his shop, Tom?"

"Yes sir. I'll fetch him if you want."

"No. Wait."

Charlie turned the cigar in his fingers, still looking across the street. The puncher in the white hat pushed through Hogan's batwings and the man in the gray suit worked his way through the crowd toward Einar's barber pole. He moved to the edge of the hotel porch and stopped.

"I was thinking of giving your pa some business, Tom. That'll take twenty minutes or so and I thought maybe you'd help me out. Take the north side of town alone and skip over to second street and check the church door."

"Why the church? We never checked it before."

"I know. But you never can tell," Charlie said.

It sounded weak. There was a long minute where Tommy didn't say anything and Charlie could hear the murmur of the people on the hotel porch. A door slammed, back to the east, and the man in the gray suit dropped his bag and began to roll his cigarette. He bent his head forward, but Charlie could tell from the way he held it that he was looking over the town from under his hat brim. Tommy came around in front of Charlie.

"You got a shave this afternoon," he said. "Before you went to Glassner's."

His voice was full of suspicion. Charlie nodded.

"Didn't have time for the haircut. I figured you'd help me out. That I could get it tonight."

Tommy bent his head and kicked at a knothole in the boardwalk. Out of the corner of his eye, Charlie could see the boy's wild mop of wheat-colored hair and the thin shoulder points, sticking up like tent poles under his wash-faded blue shirt. He knew it wasn't the rounds that appealed to the boy. It was being seen every night with the marshall. The walking with him. Tommy cocked his head.

"Well—"

Charlie nudged his arm. "You can handle it, Tom."

"Yes, sir. I know I can."

"Just do everything like I always showed you. And remember the church door."

The boy's shoulders straightened. "I'm the same as deputy, ain't I?"

"You're the same as deputy."

"Then I'll remember."

Tommy turned, then, and walked west along the boardwalk, coming more and more into Charlie's view as he went. He had his hands driven deep into his pockets and he scuffed his toes with each step. Charlie knew he could have handled him better, but it was a thousand times better, for Tommy to have his doubts about the marshall now than it would be for him to see his father get shot. Charlie set his cigar between his teeth and stepped off the jail porch, headed across the street toward the man in the gray suit.

He was certain, now, that the man was McCaslin. There wouldn't be anything else behind the way he had stood there, looking over the town and he was dressed the way Holt's telegram had said. By now, he'd built his cigarette and was even looking directly at Charlie across the lighted match cupped in his hand.

Charlie matched McCaslin's look and headed right for him.

McCaslin got his cigarette going, waved out the match and bent to pick up his bag. He shot a last, cool glance Charlie's way and then turned and went into the hotel. Charlie stopped in the middle of the street.

IT OCCURRED to him that maybe the thing to do would be to talk to Einar first. With McCaslin in the hotel, there wouldn't be any danger for the time being and Einar ought to be told. Maybe Charlie could get him to close up the shop and he could even walk part of the way home with Einar, then come back for McCaslin. Charlie made his decision and headed on across the street toward the barber shop.

He stopped by the barber pole, rounded his cigar ash off against it and dug the telegram out of his pocket. Then he went inside.

The shop was empty, except for Einar who sat dozing in the chair. He was a small, wiry man, nearing forty, with large, meaty hands and a bald spot on the crown of his head. Even asleep, he sat like he had a board up his back under his shirt and his glasses were pushed up off his nose and held by his thick blond brows. Charlie crossed to the side of the chair and slipped a finger under Einar's right sleeve garter. He let it snap and Einar jerked his head erect.

"Ah! Charlie."

"Read this," Charlie said and handed him the telegram.

Einar took it and raised his eyebrows, dropping his glasses down to his nose. He worked his mouth and sniffed, then began to trace the words with this thick finger. His face didn't change and when he'd finished reading, he let the telegram fall to his lap. He nodded his head.

"Ya. That's right."

"Well McCaslin's here in town. I saw him and he just now went into the hotel. Maybe you'd better close up and I'll walk you home. Then I can come back for McCaslin."

Einar shook his head.

"No. Here's better. I don't want no trouble where Johanna or the boy will see. Here's better. It ain't time to quit yet."

"You could close an hour early once in your life."

Einar shook his head again.

"That ain't it. Here's better." He pointed one finger down at the floor.

Charlie could see he wasn't going to change his mind. Einar had a point about Johanna and Tommy if it happened at the house where they could see. But even if they didn't go to Einar's house, if they went just anywhere out of the shop, Einar'd be better off. It made Charlie wonder, the way he was being so final about it. Charlie picked up the telegram, folded it and put it in his pocket.

"You wouldn't want to tell me what's behind it, would you, Einar?"

Einar shrugged one shoulder.

"Ya. I cut his throat once."

That set Charlie back. He'd known Einar for ten years, but in all that time, he'd never seen him get mad enough to yell, let alone cut anyone's throat. But it explained McCaslin's scar.

"Well I'll be damned," Charlie said. He couldn't think of anything else to say.

Einar shifted around in the barber chair.

"It was in the army down to Texas. Fifteen years ago. I was regiment barber to the Fourth Cavalry and one day I went over to the hospital to shave a captain. He'd got his belly shot in a fight with deserters and shouldn't drink. I get there and he's alone and McCaslin is bent over him trying to pour water down his throat. I yelled and he got scared and we fought and I cut his throat with my barber razor. In the courts martial they tell how it was one of McCaslin's brothers that the captain killed. There was five of them McCaslin brothers and all of them thick as thieves. That captain, he had trouble with a couple of them trying to kill him and he had to watch out until all the McCaslin's got killed but for George and his next youngest brother."

"I didn't know you were ever in the army," Charlie said.

"Ya. Corporal. Seven years from the middle of the war."

"You never said anything about it."

Einar shrugged one shoulder.

Charlie had turned seventeen the year the war had ended, so he'd missed it himself. And now here was a man Charlie had known for ten years who was just now telling him he'd been in it. Charlie stood looking at Einar, his respect for him growing.

"You sure surprised me, Einar."

"Ya."

"But we still got McCaslin to think about. You sure you don't want to get out of the shop to somewhere?"

"No. Here's better," Einar said.

He said it calmly and now, after Einar'd surprised him, Charlie felt a little foolish for wondering why it was he'd sounded so final a while back. Charlie had always liked Einar, but he could see now that he'd never figured a barber would have that much salt.

"Well, I'll go on over to the hotel."

"Ya."

"I'll just tell him we know the story and he better move on."

"Ya. Whatever."

Charlie turned and walked out of the shop.

PASSING Hogan's batwings, he laughed to himself. He realized suddenly that he felt a lot better about the whole thing, just from having talked with a man like Einar. He drew easily on his cigar as he walked along to the hotel door

The lobby was just the front of a long room Most of the back was filled with tables and the stairs came down along the left wall. The desk was at the foot of the stairs and Walt Miller was sitting on the stool behind it, a pen in his hand, bent over some figures in an open ledger. Charlie went over to him.

"I need some information, Walt."

Without looking up, Miller closed the ledger, pulled it off the desk and shoved it onto a shelf underneath. Then he put the pen behind his ear, laced his fingers in his lap and gazed up at Charlie from under his green eyeshade. A thin man, Walt had deep pockets under each cheekbone and deep creases like half circles at each end of his mouth. He was about Einar's age and, like him, Walt rarely said more than he had to.

"There was a man in a gray suit and black hat got off the stage," Charlie said. "About my size but maybe six or eight years older. What room's he in?"

Walt reached out to his right, spun the open register around so Charlie could see it. He put his finger on the heaviest, blackest writing on the page.

"Right there. McCaslin. He's in ten. Turn at the top of the stairs and come back this way to the front."

Charlie frowned at McCaslin's signature. He hadn't expected him to sign his own name. But now that he had, Charlie thought he could see the reason behind it. McCaslin would have changed in prison and he'd probably figure Einar would have lost any memory of him. And he wouldn't know that Holt had spotted him down at Dawson and sent the telegram on to Charlie. So he'd signed his own name. Charlie tapped the register with the backs of his fingers.

"I'll want to go up, Walt. Okay?"

"Any time."

Charlie nodded and went over toward the stairs. He stopped at the sand box by the newel post, took a last draw on his cigar and dropped it. Then he went upstairs and, at the top, turned to go back toward the hotel front.

The hall was narrow enough that, as he walked, Charlie could have raised both arms and would have brushed the walls with his fingertips. Ten was the last room down on the left. Charlie shifted his holster, then raised his right hand and rapped once. The door was snatched open.

"Raise 'em!"

It was the man in the gray suit, all right. He had a .44 leveled at Charlie's middle and he stood half covered by the door. Charlie cussed himself for a fool to think it would be easy. He raised 'em.

The door swung farther back and the .44 in McCaslin's hand waved a quarter of an inch to the left.

"All right."

Charlie took that to mean come in and when he was inside the room, McCaslin motioned him to one side and shut the door. Then he went around behind Charlie.

"Face the door. Both hands against it high and back away with your feet."

Charlie looked down at the gun. McCaslin had the hammer back and was standing far enough away so that Charlie knew he couldn't jump him and beat the shot. But if McCaslin meant to kill Einar, and if Charlie was here in the room with him now, that meant McCaslin would have to tie him up. And to tie him, McCaslin would have to come closer. So jumping him could wait. Charlie turned to the door and did what he'd been told.

"Use your left hand," McCaslin said. "Undo your gunbelt."

It was hard to keep his balance with one hand away from the door, but he got the buckle open and the gun dropped to the floor in front of his feet. McCaslin came up from behind, hooked the belt with his toe and pulled it away.

"Now straighten up."

Charlie pushed away from the door and stood there, still facing it. McCaslin backed over to the front window, pulled it open and sat down on the sill.

"Now over on the bed. On your belly with your hands up around your head."

Charlie went over to the bed and lay face down, his head turned toward McCaslin.

"Turn it the other way."

CHARLIE cussed himself again, this time for being smart and thinking he'd get a chance to jump McCaslin later. All stretched out on a bed, he didn't see what chance he'd have. He turned his head away from McCaslin and waited.

McCaslin stood up from the window sill and Charlie heard him take three steps toward the bed. Then he stopped. There was a scraping sound as he picked up the gunbelt and then his steps again, going back to the window. Charlie held his breath, waiting for him to come back toward the bed.

He held his breath until he had to let it out. But there wasn't a sound to tell Charlie McCaslin had moved. The man seemed satisfied just to sit there at the window, waiting. He was going to take his time about tying Charlie up. Or maybe he wasn't going to tie him at all.

It could be that McCaslin was just going to sit there in the window, looking down at the street. Then when Einar came out of the barber shop, McCaslin could lean out the window and shoot him. It wouldn't be fifty feet. And with Charlie not tied, McCaslin could use him as a shield to get to a horse. Charlie dug his fingers into the pillow and tried to steady his breathing.

"You're making a mistake, McCaslin."

"Sure. Shut up."

"Einar knows you're in town. There's been a telegram on you in every marshall's office between here and Baton Rouge. I showed mine to Einar."

"That ain't no news. Shut up."

"The desk clerk knows I'm up here," Charlie said. "If I don't come down pretty quick, he'll come up."

"You want to get backshot?"

Charlie forced a laugh. "You wouldn't shoot. That'd stir up the whole town and then you wouldn't get to shoot Einar."

McCaslin sighed. He sounded bored. Charlie heard him get up from the window and come across toward the bed.

"All right. You don't get shot. I can always cave your brains in."

Then there was a sharp, catching sound

to McCaslin's breath, like he'd jerked his arm up suddenly.

Charlie grabbed the pillow and twisted violently on the bed, rolling toward McCaslin. He swung the pillow as he rolled and it caught the gun as it came down, knocking it away from Charlie's head.

McCaslin stepped to the left and Charlie leaped up from the bed, the springs giving him added push. He got his fingers around McCaslin's throat and dug his thumbs as far in as they'd go. McCaslin staggered backwards towards the wall and Charlie followed him, driving in close. Charlie butted him under the jaw and McCaslin put his hands against Charlie's face and pushed. But Charlie managed to stay in next to McCaslin. Then he brought his knee up to McCaslin's groin, driving it in hard. McCaslin groaned and sank down along the wall. Charlie bent over him and smashed his fist into his jaw. Then he stepped away and picked up the gun on the bed. He pointed it down at McCaslin.

"All right. Get up."

McCaslin didn't move.

Charlie bent to grab him by the collar to pull him up, but then he thought that the man could be faking it and he pulled his leg back, taking careful measure of McCaslin's chin. Then Charlie drove his boot heel hard into it.

McCaslin's head banged on the floor.

Then Charlie bent ahead, got a handful of McCaslin's shirt and jerked.

The buttons gave way all down the front and the shirt slipped out of Charlie's hand. McCaslin fell back to the floor again and Charlie bent over him to slip his hand under his shoulder and grab his coat. Then he noticed the man's throat.

There wasn't any scar.

He snatched his gun and holster up off the floor and with the stranger's gun in hand, he ran out the door. He buckled the gunbelt on, running back along the hall. Then he turned and ran down the steps to the desk. He slammed the stranger's gun down on the desk, next to the register.

"Up in ten, Walt! Put this gun on him and don't let him out of there until I come back. Do it now!"

Walt grabbed the gun, backed off the stool and was halfway up the stairs before Charlie could get to the front door.

CHARLIE hit the front porch just as the stage driver whipped up the team. They dug in and charged ahead, east out of town and Charlie had to run slower, picking his way through the crowd past Hogan's.

Looking ahead, he saw the tall puncher in the white hat, standing by Einar's barber pole, watching the stage. When it flashed past him, he looked back up at the hotel, his eyes leveled to strike the second floor window. Then he turned into the shop.

Charlie slowed to a walk, looking past the tall puncher for a man in the crowd who might be McCaslin, but there wasn't anyone in the crowd who'd fit, so he went on down to the shop.

When he turned in the door, he saw the tall puncher standing in the middle of the room, facing Einar. Einar sat stifly in his chair. When he heard Charlie's step, he glanced toward the door.

"You come next after him—Marshall," Einar said.

He pointed at the tall puncher and there was the slightest shade of tension in his voice, a little extra weight to the word marshall.

"You was wanting a shave, wasn't you mister?" Einar asked the puncher and the man stood there thinking for a minute. Then he nodded and went over to the coat tree and hung up his hat. Charlie felt a chill scatter down his spine.

You could have called the puncher's hair brown. It only depended on what you meant by the word. The tall puncher had hair that Charlie might have called blond, but that another would have called brown.

He took his time hanging up his hat and when he turned and walked to the chair, he moved with a cat-like, ready balance that made Charlie think. But he couldn't be sure.

The puncher crawled into the chair and Einar snapped the cloth around his neck with more noise than he maybe had to and Charlie sat there, looking at the puncher's heavy beard, trying to see through it to a scar.

It'd been Einar who suggested the shave. Not the puncher. Maybe the puncher had only wanted a haircut or maybe he hadn't wanted anything out of Einar but satisfaction of the kind that would have been a

crying need to him after his years in a prison. If the puncher had been in a prison. Charlie sat around a little to take his weight off his gun hip, and the tall puncher drew his gun slowly and brought it up and laid it on top of the barber cloth.

Charlie wished then that he'd drawn.

Not that most men didn't pull their guns and put them in their laps when they got a shave. There'd even been guns that had fallen to the floor, slipping out of a dangling holster as a man lay back for his shave. So Charlie sat there, the muscles in his back growing stiff from the tension.

Einar tilted that chair back and the tall puncher rolled his head around to where he could look out between his shaded lids, watching Charlie. Charlie swallowed and sat there, watching the puncher's gun.

Einar turned his back on Charlie and began to whip up the lather. He took his time doing it and then he brushed it on the puncher's face and turned away again and honed the razor until it seemed to Charlie that there wouldn't be anything left of it if Einar didn't stop. But finally Einar turned away from his stone, stropped the razor slowly and then laid it up against the puncher's throat.

"Here's the one. Come get him, Charlie," Einar said. And he turned the razor up on edge where he could slice the puncher's jugular vein if the man so much as twitched.

THE man in the gray suit was a McCaslin all right. Charlie got that much of it straight when he took both of them across to the jail. They were brothers and the one in the white hat was George. Not as dark as his brother, but when you looked at him close, you could see his hair would pass for brown. So Charlie locked them both up, in separate cells, handcuffed to the bars and then he went back across the street to the barber shop.

He told Einar what had happened in the room up at the hotel and Einar said he guessed the tall puncher, George, would have shot him and that his brother would have jumped out of the hotel window and got away on the black mare that McCaslin led into town.

"I was a fool, Einar," Charlie said. "I got sucked in by the brother, all right, just the way McCaslin wanted it. Good thing you saw that scar when he crawled into your chair. I figured he was just a puncher."

"I didn't need the scar," Einar said quietly. "I knew. From the minute he walked in the door, I knew. I only didn't want you hurt, Charlie. You been nice to Tommy."

"I guess I wasn't handling any of it right," Charlie said. Einar nodded.

"Ya," he said. "But there's things a man don't see."

Charlie just stood there when Einar said that. It was a damn funny feeling, being a marshall who'd had to lean on a barber. But that was only fair. Einar was a father who had to lean on a marshall. There was Tommy who couldn't see his dad for the barber cloth and Einar was man enough to let him grow along and not interfere. So Charlie owed a little something to Einar and he could pay it out through Tommy.

"I told Tommy I'd be getting a haircut, Einar. I sent him over to check the church door and I better be in the chair when he comes."

Einar grinned and threw the cloth across Charlie and worked fast until he had his hair half cut. Then Tommy came in. He looked at Charlie to see how the haircut was coming, then went over to the bench and sat down. He sighed and sat back with the air of a man who's done his day's work well. Einar swung the chair around facing the bench and Charlie cleared his throat.

"Everything all right, Tom?"

"Yep."

"You check that church door the way I told you?"

"Yep."

There was a long pause, then, and the only sound in the shop was the even clipping of Einar's shears. Presently Tommy sighed and stretched. His voice had a man to man sound.

"Everything all right on your side of town, Marshall?"

"Yep," Charlie said.

"No trouble, huh?"

Charlie shook his head. "No trouble, Tom. No trouble at all."

Einar's shears clipped steadily along the back of Charlie's neck.

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THE CAMP-FIRE

JUST how Mr. Aleko Lilius, who was born almost exactly across the globe from it, came to own an island paradise in the south seas, you may read on page 86 of this issue. For Mr. Lilius himself, once celebrated by the late Bob Ripley as the only white maharajah in captivity, the incident was nearly humdrum, and would hardly have been worth a yawn, had it not been that he deliberately hunted up the most curse-infested atoll in the Pacific, and dared the fates to make anything but a Garden of Eden out of it.

Destiny, as usual, proved most obliging.

Author in several languages, editor, explorer and Adventurer-of-all-trades, Mr. Lilius is frequently surprised himself at the things he has done and the places he's been. *Adventure's* editors, however, have seen documentary evidence of his wondrous career, and are in a position to contend vigorously any suspicion on Mr. Lilius's own part that he might have spent the last thirty-odd years in some pretty virile daydreaming.

Mr. Lilius was born in Finland long enough ago to have partaken in both that embattled nation's wars.

IT HAS long been the conviction of *Adventure's* editors that good fiction, regardless of setting, subject matter, or the language in which it is written, conveys a universal message—has a certain boundary-smashing, creed-destroying language of its own. For nearly a half-century of publication we've felt at least that this was the language of *Adventure,* and as this month's proof we offer Barnaby Conrad's revealing story, *One More Fight.*

Many of us by now have seen bullfights; most of us have read about them, and nearly all of us have at least ill-founded opinions on them. But how many of us have stood in the path of charging peril out of nothing but conviction—the need to demonstrate that we live in a universe where man makes the rules that he himself must live by, regardless of the forces thundering down?

We would not venture to say that an answer to the above is anything Mr. Conrad intended to convey—merely that it was what we got out of *One More Fight.* That, and the priceless feeling of authenticity without which the greatest of stories is nothing.

Mr. Conrad himself writes:

This story is based on the last fight of Manolete, the greatest bullfighter of the last twenty years, who was killed in Spain in 1947. I knew him in Spain and Peru and tried to model The Stork after him. I studied bullfighting under Juan Belmonte, probably the greatest matador of all time, and fought in Mexico, Spain and Peru, as an amateur. Biggest thrill in my life was getting a couple of ears off the dead bull when fighting on the same program with the *Maestro* near Sevilla. (At 55 he still fought in charity fights and was still great).

I attended the University of Mexico, North Carolina, and graduated from Yale. Was a vice consul in Spain during the war. Served six months as Sinclair Lewis's secretary and chess companion in 1947. Ran a night club with a bullfighting motif on the Barbary Coast for a year. Am freelancing and doing portraits. A story included in the 1949 O. Henry Award collection gave me as much fun as anything before or since. That story has been reprinted in ten foreign countries and has made me $2,500—more than the total sales of my first novel! Forgot to begin in the beginning and say I was born in 1922.

WE ARE pleased to recruit *Adventurer* John Holland to the Writers' Brigade—that he comes by his title honestly, you will easily note from the following:

Born in Sioux City, Iowa 29 years ago. Raised in Boise, Idaho, Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraska. Pretty much the standard American boy until I was hurt badly enough playing high school football that I had to quit. From there it was a tossup between flying and writing, the decision going to the wild blue yonder. Soloed at sixteen, held jobs such as ticket taker in a dance hall to pay for flying time. At eighteen had a forced landing in a freshly listed and muddy cornfield with much damage to the airplane, not my own. Felt obliged to buy more time from the fine and unfortunate guy I'd thus damaged, so I took a job driving trucks all through the west. Touched Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, Utah, North and South Dakota and Kansas to name a few. Much taken with what I saw and determined some day to settle in Colorado.

Then the war, during the early years of which I achieved commercial status as a pilot with instructor's rating. Then the Air Corps Central Instructor's school at Brooks. School closed while I was there, so I jumped into the glider program and was made a flight officer some six months later. Shipped immediately to the Pacific where MacArthur, otherwise a brilliant soldier, failed to see gliders would be useful. Had seen New Guinea and was on Biak engrossed in learning to play poker when the Glider Group was disbanded. I got a job with an Air Freight Forwarding Field Team, then, and from there saw Leyte, Luzon, Ie Shima and was one of the earliest into Japan, landing at Tachikawa. Shipped home Christmas Eve of '45. Discharged a Second John, Ft. Logan, Colorado.

School, then at Omaha U. with an instructor's job flying, part time and in the summer. Quit that to answer the call of my beckoning Underwood which is something of an antique, having been made in August, 1903. Repaired to Oklahoma University at Norman, where I learned to argue with Foster Harris, who used to appear in *Adventure* back in the days of the civil war, to hear him tell it.

Met the *girl* in class at Norman, married her a while ago. She knows ninety three different and distinct ways to use a tomato as seasoning and is a great help in my writing, she having flown (as a WASP during the war) such airplanes as the P-51, which I was never lucky enough to get within spitting distance of. Her name is Helen and she's been all over and wants to go back, so you can see she keeps me busy, just trying to catch up.

We plan to travel, raise a basketball team and eventually settle in the vicinity of Allenspark, Colorado, where I can do more writing looking out through a window that frames Mt. Meeker, snow-capped most of the year and all in all a very fine mountain.

CONTINUING the discussion of the origins of the word "yacht," developed by readers in recent issues, Reader S. Dykstra writes from British Columbia:

In your March issue on page 76 it said "The word 'yacht' is derived from the Dutch word *'jagen'* (to hunt)." In the September issue, your reader Eric Lucy, of New Orleans, adds a few personal addenda to Carl Lane's speculation. However, the word *"jagen"* does not only mean "to hunt." It also means "to speed."

Another spelling of this word *jagen* is *"jachten."* It is found in the combination *"neeuwjacht,"* which means "snow blizzard." The Navy knows this word as "torpedo jager," (destroyer). Again it means both hunting (such as submarines) and speed. In the old days of the navy, that is in the 17th century, the fleet always was accompanied by so called *"adires jachten."* It means "advice or despatch yachts." These were used for communication between the fleet and the admiralty and were of course built for speed and nothing else.

Perhaps this will clarify the word a little more.

S. Dykstra,
Revelstoke, B. C.

A NOTE from Reader Clark M. Kee, Assistant Director, Hawaii Aeronautics Commission in Honolulu, brings up a rather sad speculation. We were extremely happy to hear from Mr. Kee, but just

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now we're wondering—is anybody ever going to remember us?

Mr. Kee writes:

I have been a constant reader of *Adventure* since its inception back in 1910, I believe. I have missed very few issues down through the years, though I have worked in 18 different countries, including all of Central America, the West Indies, some countries of South America and a few spots in the far East. Consequently I am personally familiar with the locale of many of the stories that have appeared in *Adventure*.

I believe that the real heyday of the magazine was probably back in the 1920s and early 1930's when you published such masters as Talbot Mundy, MacCreagh, White, Surdez and many many others. Writers who went on to world fame. Then there was Dirty Shirt Jones and his compadres and a host of other characters

Frankly I do not believe your present crop of writers nor the stories they put out can any where nearly approach the period I am referring to.

We have one additional comment to make regarding Mr. Kee's letter: We're firmly convinced that we are still publishing authors who will go "on to world fame"—in fact, many of them already have!

FOLLOWING are more readers' reactions to—and suggestions for—*Adventure*. Once again, *Adventure's* editors would like to express their thanks for the thoughts contained in letters such as these.

The first from Dr. E. W. Pitkin, Congers, N. Y.:

I have just been reading all those fine letters from old readers of the magazine you published in the July number. Perhaps you may be interested in a woman's reaction to your request for comments.

Adventure is the only magazine I have read regularly for well over 30 years. I remember that you published a letter I wrote to you about the medical action of alcohol back in 1915. I was sitting up nights with a sick father at the time, and *Adventure* helped to pass the long dark hours.

For many years I did not subscribe, as I enjoyed the thrill of finding the magazine each month on the newsstands. But in the days of your splendid continued stories, that thrill was sometimes tinged with anxiety until I spotted the lurid cover.

One of my favorite long continued stories was one in which verses from *Fifteen Men*

(Continued on page 104)

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(Continued from page 102)

on the Dead Man's Chest kept appearing. It was a great yarn of the sea. Then there were Talbot Mundy's Tros stories, and Lamb's papers about the Crusades, and the Kingi Buana stories—were they by Young or Gordon MacCreagh? And have they ever been published in book form?

However among short stories, two in the present issue *Seeker of the Deep* by R. W. Daly, and *Soosoo the Slayer* by H. S. M. Kemp can vie with anything published in past years.

My friends used to ask me where I picked up odd bits of information which so often came in handy—and more often than not I could proudly answer, "I read that in *Adventure!*"

Mr. B. R. Camp's suggestions were good. There must be at least one *Adventure* every month. Remember when you published two magazines a month? That was fine but it took too much time away from serious reading. I like the pulp Mag, and had forgotten that it was A. S. H. who tried to dress up our old *Adventure* as a slick.

I wonder if I could rate an identification card? I am over 70 now but I still go into out of the way corners of Mexico and Guatemala, looking for Maya ruins.

FURTHER on the I. D. cards demand still doesn't justify our issuing new cards, but we're continuingly delighted to reactivate those cards already in circulation, and pleased to receive notes such as the following from Fred Clark, San Jose, California:

> I believe the revival of the *Adventure* identification tags would be a wonderful idea.
>
> A reader since 1920.

AND Reader William Owen Kerry, of Los Angeles, California, writes:

> I wonder how many of the old identification cards are in existence today. I got mine over 40 years ago and I have carried it in my pocket-book all these years. It's been all over Europe, World War I, and all over this glorious land of ours, including Canada and Mexico. It nestles in my wallet along with one of my old dog tags.
>
> After all these years I have never missed an issue of one of the finest magazines, our own *Adventure*. With best of luck to all and I hope to carry it forty years more.

There's little or nothing we can add to the above—other than thanks for stopping by. EGJ

(Continued from page 85)

UP from the reef forward, swelling the bedlam, sounded the Tub's bellow: "Drink 'er up boys and girls . . .drink 'er up . . . up . . ."

Whack—whack, went Ah Ching's unseen knife. Soon the fishy odor of turtle flesh swirled aft to greet the fumes of rum . . . the stench of the paint locker's spilled whale oil . . . the heady sweetness of island flowers crushed beneath naked toes. Who, Harry wondered hazily, would eat all the turtles silly Ah Ching was butchering. Harry took another drink.

The following two hours were never to be clear to the *Tiare's* barman that day. One wave after another of screaming Honu islanders broke over the boat's sides. There would be a phalanx of outstretched brown hands. More teeth on yielding corks. More gurgles. Finally streams of natives clambering over the ship's sides to the reef below to make room for the newly arrived hordes. Tub had moved to the skiff, and was overseeing operations. As the last wave of Honuans broke over the *Tiare's* side a trail of islanders was already swimming its way across the lagoon toward the nearby shore . . . bottle in one hand . . . the other paddling. . . . mouths wide open in happy laughter.

Harry remembered a foul-smelling Tub leaving the skiff to climb aboard the shuddering *Tiare.* The fat man's hands, sticky with turtle flesh, slapped Harry's shoulders. "It's two o'clock . . . high tide!" the Tub shouted. Out of hazy eyes, Harry watched the fat man throw empty cases and bottles overboard, shoo the last of the Honu islanders from the heaving *Tiare's* deck.

Harry made an unsteady gesture toward the after deck where the rum had been. "'S all gone," he rasped bitterly. "Hope you're satisfied. It'll only take us ten years to pay for it."

"Turn in, boy," the Tub said. His dripping bulk wheeled aft toward the auxiliary engine.

Was this what getting drunk did, Harry wondered, making his way toward the after cabin. Make the deck bounce under you like a thing afloat? He sank into his bunk, wondering why the Tub had started the motor.

He awoke six hours later to the darkness

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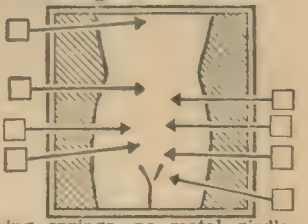

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of a rolling after cabin. He sat up, rubbed his eyes, staggered toward the companionway. Sea—deep, gentle, safe, black sea—stretched comfortingly to a far, moon-etched horizon, where danced a tiny dot of land.

He raced into the galley. Visored cap a-tilt, huge shoulders comfortably hunched over his magazine and a bottle of beer, sat the Tub. At the moment his near-sighted brown eyes were fixed on the photograph of Charlotte and her son on the wall.

"What h-happened?" stuttered Harry.

"Better stay sober next time, boy," grinned the Tub. Then he added, "No, I wanted you full. Was afraid it might not work. . . ."

"What wouldn't?"

"Swappin' a cargo of rum for lightweight tortoise shell and floatin' the *Tiare* off the reef."

Harry murmured incredulously. "The kanakas drank her off?"

The Tub nodded. "Ah Ching butchered over four hundred turtles—those the natives rode out on. Shells are in the hold."

"But shell ain't worth anything," Harry objected.

"Aren't," corrected the Tub. Then added, "Are." He shoved a cable beside the open magazine. That cable quoted a tortoise shell price that staggered Harry; the magazine article predicted the tortoise shell spectacle fad that was to sweep the States in 1922. "Remember the new specs on Ed at Lovaina's yesterday?" the Tub asked.

Harry nodded.

"With this cargo, Favors & McNiel," the fat man went on, "we can pay Herr Stoodt for his rum, clean up what's owin' on the *Tiare*, 'n still have enough left over to bring a couple of folks home we're itchin' to see."

Harry swallowed, looked out the porthole to the dot that was Honu, and murmured, "Favors & McNeil." He turned back to the Tub. "If we ever get heeled, Tub, let's . . ."

"Get some shell specs," supplied the Tub, " 'n pay back the favor our Honu friends did us, eh?" His eyes wandered to the porthole. "Say twenty years from now . . . you'n me 'n Charlotte'll drop 'em off some champagne. Better for 'em than rum."

(Continued from page 10)

VOCATIONAL

DIVING to adventure.

I would appreciate being told where I can obtain training in deep sea diving in a course not more than four years long. I am twenty-four and a combat veteran.

Donald W. Moffett
Memphis, Mo.

Reply by Hilbert Schenck, Jr.: To my knowledge there is one school teaching commercial diving outside of the armed services. This is the Sparling School of Diving in Wilmington, California.

The course at Sparling is twenty weeks long and is G.I. accredited. Once you graduate it might be possible to apprentice to a working diver on the G.I. bill, if you are still able to take advantage of G.I. benefits. Wilmington is the seaport for Los Angeles and Sparling students learn by working around this area on practical jobs. During your twenty weeks of training you would use all types of gear, both deep and shallow water equipment, and would, I believe, graduate as a competent commercial diver.

I would suggest you write at once to Mr. Cress, Sparling School of Diving, 1148 Wilmington California, giving full particulars on your period and time of army service and listing any physical defects you may have. I would look into this immediately since the G.I. bill is running or has run out unless you are a Korean war vet.

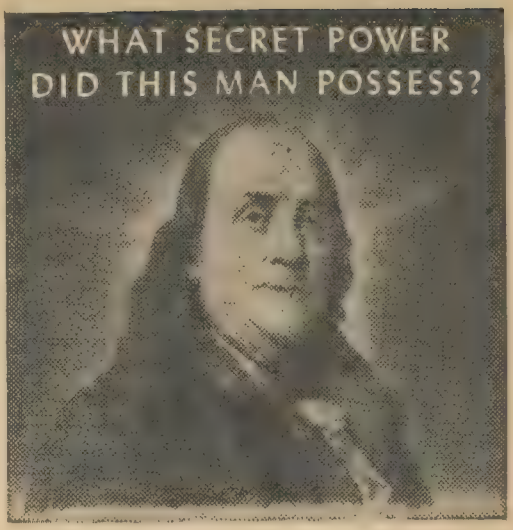
DANGER season fire-watchers.

A published item last summer gave me the impression that the Forest Service gave temporary employment during the summer to firewatchers. These temporary employes, I gather, supplement the regular force during the dangerous season, or possibly are used as relief to the regular employes.

1. Is it true that the Service does employ such temporary help?
2. If so, to whom should I make application for such temporary employment?
3. Would the fact that I am a civil service employe in another department prevent my being accepted? My department has regulations which forbid acceptance of "outside employment" but I don't think they were intended to cover such a situation as this.

W. A. Deen
Abilene, Texas

Reply by Arthur H. Carhart: I am answering your questions as numbered:



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1. Yes, there are extra men employed by the U.S. Forest Service during summer months, on a temporary basis, at various jobs. Such jobs as fire lookouts, fire guards, on trail construction and range improvement projects. Your background would come into consideration as to the type of job you would be most likely to secure. The range survey or improvement work, for example, usually goes to upper classmen studying forestry, since they know quite a bit about range plants and can use experience fitting them for later permanent openings.

2. Application for employment, stating your qualifications, can be made to the Assistant Regional Forester in charge of Personnel, U.S. Forest Service, in any of the regions: Milwaukee, Missoula, (Mont.), Denver, Albuquerque, Ogden, San Francisco, Portland.

3. My best judgment is, that if you have Civil Service rating, it would be of some aid in securing a job. The question of whether or not this would be considered "outside employment" by your agency is a matter for that agency to pass on; their interpretation. With considerable experience with Civil Service I wouldn't attempt to interpret rules.

WILD HARVEST

I am interested in "brush picking", i.e. wild ferns, moss, etc. in northwestern California.

Please give me all possible information about possible markets in and near the bay area, prices I can expect to get wholesale. Is it necessary to get a permit from the forest or park service for picking on public lands? I am particularly interested in moss as I know the location of large quantities. Is moss sold by the pound?

J. C. McLennan
Redwood Valley, Cal.

Reply by Frank Winch: Regret that I can't be of much help to you regarding possible markets in the bay area or any other area for moss etc.

As for prices on moss: genuine Holland moss, an 8 cu. ft. bale, can be had for $3.99 local picked moss runs $2.50 a bale. bale.

MANHUNTER material.

I would like to know what the requirements are for acceptance in the F. B. I. or Secret Service as a career. I haven't had much training in this field of work, but I am very interested in it. I would appreciate any information you can give me on those subjects, also any information on the Texas Rangers.

Jack L. Dittemore
San Francisco, Calif.

Reply by Francis Bent: An applicant for a position with the F. B. I. must be a citizen of the U.S.; between 25 and 36 years old, inclusive; willing to serve where directed; have at least 2 years commercial experience in the legal, accounting, or business fields; be a graduate from (a) a recognized school of law, or (b) a recognized school of accounting, and able to qualify on the witness stand in the practical accounting field as an expert, or (c) have had extensive investigational or law-enforcement experience; be in the very best of health and physical condition; pass strict physical examinations; be well proportioned as to height and weight; have no conspicuous physical oddities.

FISHING—
WOODCRAFT

PLUG CASTING for bass.

What are the names and the colors of plugs you suggest I get for bass in my section of North Carolina. I live in the central part and do most of my fishing in Deep River and farm lakes and ponds.

Floyd Williamson
Ramseur, N.C.

Reply by John Alden Knight: I have always been of the opinion that the way in which a bass bug is cast and handled has a lot more to do with its taking qualities than its design and color. However, I have found that some bass plugs seem to do the work better for me than others. For surface lures, I use the Jitterbug and also Fred Arbogast's Popping Plug. For deep-running lures, I like the Heddon River Runt, and also the Midget Plugs. These little fellows really deliver the goods when the bass are not feeding at the surface.

I find that the choice of a plug should depend on what the bass happen to be doing at the time. If there is a Solunar Period in progress and the bass are active, they are usually feeding at the surface. Thus, a surface lure produces better than a subsurface lure. Conversely, when the bass are not rising freely, a lure which is fished right down near the bottom will be a better producer. Incidentally, have you ever tried one of the wigglers such as the Shimmy Wiggler used with a piece of good old-fashioned pork rind? This lure has really done wonders in the Florida lakes, fished right down near the bottom.

A great many men with whom I fish prefer the standard red-and-white finish. You know the one I mean—the red head with the white body. For my part, I've always had better luck with the perch finish which is basically yellow, trimmed with the scale design and some green and red. Others

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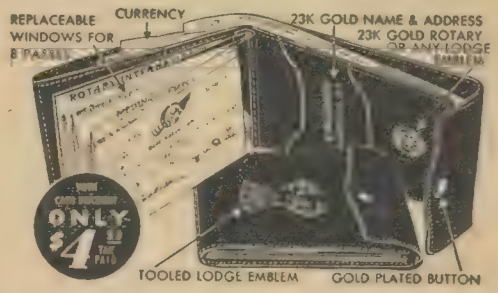
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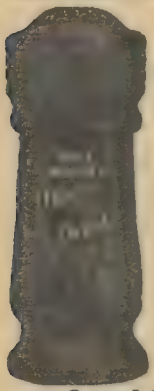

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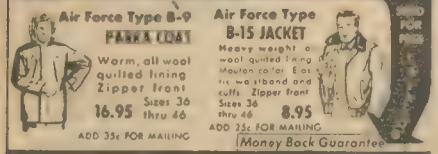

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prefer the creek chub finish and I have had excellent luck on that one, too. The Helin boys, who turn out the famous Flatfish plug, tell us that the plug that they paint orange color with black spots will outcatch any of their other products at least two to one.

I suppose that a poll of the bass fishermen would indicate that yellow is the favorite color, always allowing, of course, for a certain amount of trim in certain colors, mostly green and red.

I realize that the above is not too indicative. However, I honestly believe that if you have confidence in a plug and fish it accordingly, you will do just about as well with that plug as you will with any other.

A CUSTOM-MADE axe.

Who will make me an axe after my own ideas? I think I can say I am a disciple of Nessmuck and Horace Kephart. but I do not follow anyone slavishly—for instance, I've gone out in the Sierras here without blanket or matches or salt, and while I didn't miss any meals, I did postpone some.

Now my idea is to find some firm here or elsewhere, send them a pattern to go by and ask them to make one for me. I have very definite ideas of what I want—eight ounce head of finest tool steel and tool steel throughout, and fashioned in the Hudson Bay axe shape. I had a dandy of this description—cost me eight dollars twelve years ago, and I lost it. Eight dollars spread over twelve years is not much, and I will gladly go to twenty if I am reasonably sure of a good article.

Samuel B. McDearman
Los Angeles, Calif.

Reply by Paul M. Fink: It is very refreshing to hear anyone speak of Nessmuck and Kephart. I cut my camping teeth on Nessmuck's *Woodcraft* more years ago than I care to mention, and I often reread it to this day, simply for sheer enjoyment. Horace Kephart was my predecessor in *Ask Adventure*, and a personal friend of a number of years standing, with whom I have argued at length over many points of camping gear and procedure. I had the pleasure of supplying some of the illustrations of his book, *Our Southern Highlanders*.

Now to your axe problem—I don't know if I can help you in this, for I have no personal acquaintance with any shop doing custom work along this line. Nose around the machine shops in Los Angeles, and you might find one that would be able to do the work, or could put you in touch with a forge that would. I'd say that your success will depend most on whether you

might arouse the interest of some one in the front office who reads your letter.

I understand full well your idea of wanting to design some of your gear, for I've done a lot of it myself. Knives from old files, tents, pack-harness and frames, grills, etc—I've gotten a lot of kick from building them as I wanted them.

ORIENTAL horn bow.

I am interested in sources of supplies and instructions for making an Oriental horn bow. If I have been correctly informed, these are also known as composite bows. Also, I am interested in making a split-bamboo bow, provided I can find a source of material and instructions. What is your opinion of split-bamboo as a material for bows? What is suitable steel for making broadheads, and where can it be obtained?

Martin J. Padgett
Elizabeth City, N. C.

Reply by Earl B. Powell: It is hard to get the materials for an oriental horn bow, as there is so little demand for them and the materials are kind of scarce.

I suggest that you write to *The American Bowman-Review*, at McMinnville, Oregon about a book on the subject which they carry in stock—also they might be able to put you in touch with materials needed.

As to bamboo, it is hard to get. Also the old saying of "too much sugar for a lime" fits the amount of work in making one—only to find it will not come up to expectations, for a bamboo bow will shoot like a house afire for a short time and then commence to letting down.

Unless you have time to make broadheads you will find it cheaper to get them—20 for $2 postpaid.

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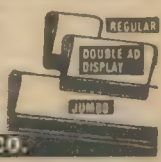

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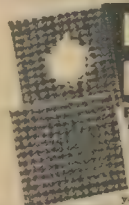

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LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

LOST TRAILS—John A. Thompson, mining engineer, and author of "lost" mine stories. Last heard living in a New York hotel, but may be anywhere. Please write to Raymond Dow, 2922—164th St., Flushing 58, N. Y.

I would like to locate a relative of mine.—His name is Edward F. Felden, most of the time called Eddie. When last heard of, in 1929, he was a salesman for the Smith Manufacturing Company of Fort Worth, Texas. His age would be in the middle forties, light brown hair, possibly greying. Write Sgt. Billy W. Fielden, AF 18338776 Hq. & Hq. Sqdn., 2225th Personnel Processing Group, Fort Dix, New Jersey.

I would like to hear from anyone knowing the whereabouts of my father, William Blain Hingley. When last heard of he was in Spokane, Washington. Notify Mrs. Jim Henderson, Hot Springs, Montana, Box 462.

I would like to reestablish contact with Willis Threlkeld of Oklahoma, last seen at Fort Monmouth in the summer of 1946. George P. Calvert, 1380 Whitman St., Williamsport 21, Pa.

I wish to learn the whereabouts of Miler Edminston or any member of his family—wife, Nina, daughters, Gladys and Shirley, or son, Harry. The last I knew of them, they were in Willisville, Ill. He was a foreman of the construction crew which built the road between Ava and Willisville in '29, I think. Roy Crosby, R. 4 care of E. Beaubien, Caro, Mich.

I would like to locate Charles Lesweka who lives in Chicago, Ill. Thanks. Thomas M. Fuller, Annex 1 N. 750 South State St., Elgin, Ill.

I would like to contact MARIUS F. BOS, whose last address was Oriente Province, Cuba. Last heard of him when we parted in Puerto Mexico, Veracruz. Also BILL BROOKS. We operated a saloon together in Puerto Barrios, Guatemala. Please contact E. Livingston, 40 High Street, Reno, Nevada.

(Continued from page 73)

moon picked out a prolonged, flowing movement as of something thickly stirred. Then came a thud. A dozen wooden bars gave way at once, like rotten teeth, with scarce a sound, yielding to the malign resistless force within. Then through the gap, flowed on fold of mottled strength.

For a space there was a great lashing and writhing as of a chemical warfare between two flowing liquids. Thousands upon thousands of the ants were killed before Nagara won free. Then across the dim-lit clearing was the sense of something racing with an effortless, fourth-dimensional ease, and the waiting jungle swallowed it and the sound of its going.

IN THE light of early dawn the naturalist read the whole story in the army of dead ants that lay about the broken crate, and the clean-picked pathway that marked the myriads' passing. In natural course his captive would have slept another week at least. But the bush, forever antipodal, had played its subtlest most resistless force against him—to save him.

Swiftly he followed with his men along Nagara's trail, but within a mile he knew the quest was hopeless.

Straight as a surveyor's line that trail led back to the trysting place. There it became a double trail, two parallel pathways marked by bent and broken stems of fern and creepers.

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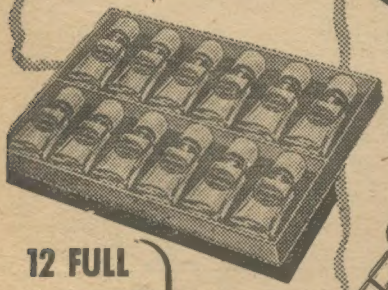

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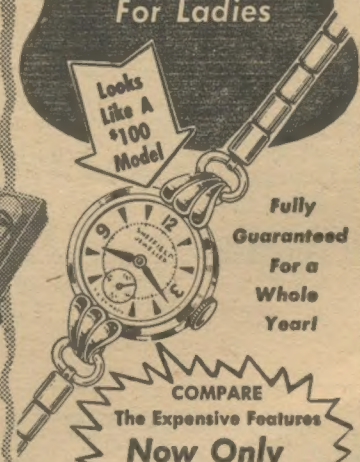

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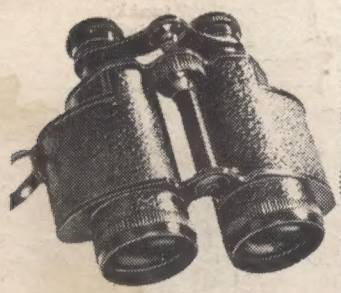

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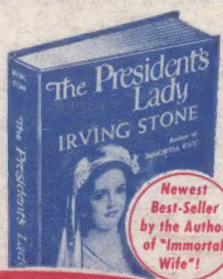

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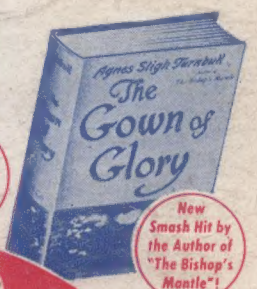

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